THE EVANGEL OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS

A. S. GEDEN, M.A., D.D.

JUL 5 1978

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An Exposition and a Defence

BY

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PUBLISHED FOR THE
FERNLEY LECTURE TRUST

LONDON
THE EPWORTH PRESS
J. ALFRED SHARP

First Published, July 1926.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE
CAMELOT PRESS LTD., LONDON & SOUTHAMPTON.

PREFACE

A FEW words will suffice by way of introduction to the following essay or lecture. It will not be judged presumptuous or out-of-place if the writer claims herein both in study and subject to be following in the steps of his father, *haud passibus aequis*, to whom I owe so much, and who delivered the Fernley Lecture at the Camborne Conference more than fifty years ago. The problems which then engaged attention have changed their aspect with the lapse of time, with the widened outlook and the increase of knowledge that new discoveries and the co-ordination of science and theological discussion have brought. It is certain however that the leading thought and contention of that Lecture are as securely established and as urgent now for the presentation of truth and reality as they were in 1874. Of these truths and scriptures the prophets were the chief exponents and examples; and a study of their thought and writings has been one of the main subjects of a life-work begun by the writer in the long past under his teaching and direction.

The environment and standpoint, the condition and character of the authors of the Old Testament Scriptures are so diverse that it may well seem difficult if not impossible to disentangle a consistent and single theme of doctrine and truth. It is the purpose and

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endeavour of this book to show what is the aim and thought in this respect of the Hebrew writers, to trace briefly and throughout their convinced and reasoned message to their hearers, enforced amidst all diversity of experience and circumstance with a sure and intelligent faith; to urge that this their teaching is in the direct line of development of the most vital and certain of human beliefs with regard to God and man's relation to Him; and that to ignore or pass it by is to break one of the links, and that not the least important and necessary, that bind man's progressive and adventurous thought to its beginnings and secure its stability. Historically and doctrinally such connections with the past, whether in Palestine, in Greece, in India, or elsewhere, can only be depreciated or set aside with much present peril and loss; and their spiritual value can hardly be over-estimated. It is well worth while to attempt to fix this central purpose and meaning of the Old Testament writings, the thread that runs through the whole, and to estimate the contribution which the thinkers and writers of the Jews have made to the sum of human knowledge, as it seeks to make good its footing beyond the tangible and visible in the realm of the unseen. It is evident that in this it is implied that the Hebrew Scriptures are a unity in diversity, with a single intention and aim. And this will hardly be denied by any real student of their text.

Perhaps the title chosen for the present book needs explanation or defence in view of its contents. It is not in any narrow sense that the term 'prophets' has been interpreted and employed. All the writers and contributors to the volume of the Old Testament

are prophets in the wider and less restricted acceptation of the word; and the Old Testament itself knows nothing of any lesser meaning. No doubt the major contribution in these books to ethical and religious teaching is made by the writers to whom ecclesiastical and modern usage has more especially given the name, the Prophets Major and Minor. In the Scriptures themselves however, both Old and New, Moses and Samuel and many others of earlier or later date bear the title, and there is no indication of any differentiation between them of status or office. The brief and general survey therefore that follows is a survey of prophetic writings, and would have been faulty and incomplete in that respect and in view of its ultimate purpose if the message and teaching of any of them had been ignored or omitted, so far at least as Israelite thought and belief are concerned. All the Hebrew authors whose words are recorded in the Old Testament are 'prophets' in the larger and more enduring sense. And doubtless there were many prophets in Israel beside these whose teaching and work have found no perennial monument when in the fullness of their time the workers themselves went down to Sheol.

It may seem strange to some readers that so little reference is made in the following pages to the so-called critical questions and theories of high importance that concern the Old Testament. The writer would venture to plead that he is not entirely ignorant of these things. Their sufficient and due discussion however would have involved not one but many volumes of the dimensions to which a Lecture in this series is necessarily limited; and in any case did not seem pertinent or obligatory to the object more directly in

view. The solution of these questions and the theories that have been propounded elucidate in many respects the real circumstances and intentions of the authors of the books of Scripture, and place their history and meaning in a new and illuminating perspective. That they have been and are so often carried to an extreme is their misfortune as well as their fault. The debt of all students and lovers of the scriptural record to the unwearied efforts and devotion of many scholars to its interpretation is very great.

Note on the name and title 'Jehovah.' It is of set purpose and intentionally that in this book the form ' Jehovah ' has been retained. In the judgement of the writer its retention is capable of complete defence and justification. Etymologically no doubt the form is wrong ; it is a hybrid composed of the consonants of the so-called Tetragrammaton and the vowels of the Hebrew *adonai*, ' lord.' The usage however of many centuries has made it accepted and right for all English-speaking peoples and has set it in their hearts. It is enshrined in the regard and devotion of generations of Englishmen and in the Bible and hymnology of the Christian Church. The same principle of accepted usage has rectified and made generally acceptable many other words of doubtful origin or etymology. The modern substitutes, Jahveh, Yahveh, &c., which disfigure so many of our books are based upon a conjectural etymology, which may or may not be right, but they do not represent as far as can be judged any real approximation to the true and original pronunciation of the divine name among the Jews. No Jew ever said ' Jahveh ' or ' Yahveh ' as we pronounce the word, any more than he said ' Jehovah.' The transliterations of the name in Coptic and Greek would suggest that the nearest approach to the correct pronunciation in our English Bible is made in the monosyllable ' Jah ' (Ps. lxviii. 4). From motives of reverence the Jews avoided pronouncing the name, and all knowledge of its true pronunciation has long been lost. The real origin also of the word is uncertain,

although the theory has generally been accepted by scholars that it is derived from the Hebrew word for ' becoming,' and the name would therefore originally signify ' he who brings the universe into being,' or the Creator. Modern forms of spelling which are conjecturally substituted for Jehovah are based upon this theory of the etymology of the sacred name.

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THE EVANGEL OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS

CHAPTER I

THE GENERAL THOUGHT AND PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

The books of the Old Testament, as they have been preserved and delivered from of old, constitute a library of moral and religious thought and teaching, deficient no doubt in many respects but with a real and permanent message to the Church universal and to the world in every age. They have not been superseded, although they have found their completion and fulfilment in the New. As a treasure store of history, protest and faith, they are of undying interest, and the world of letters and of religion would be the poorer if they should cease to be studied and were consigned to oblivion. The Jewish nation has been the custodian of its sacred Hebrew writings, and its expositors and scholars have not been unfaithful to their trust. They have been fallible, as all mortal men are fallible, and as the authors of the books of the Old Testament themselves were fallible and not beyond the possibility of error; but they did not, as far as a competent judgement can be formed, consciously pervert aught, either concealing the truth or setting down aught in malice. That they were always conscious of the

dignity and responsibility of their work in preservation and transmission it would be too much to assert. Too often they found defect in the manuscripts and traditions, the material and groundwork of their labours, where we and they crave for order and enlightenment. But the fruits of their faithful and persevering work through the centuries are with us to-day, and we should miss much if Jewish students and rabbis had been less true to their duty and charge.

It was not without reason that the Jews themselves divided their sacred literature as they had received it into three parts, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings,—Torah, Nebhī'īm and Kethūbhīm ; the Law consisting of five books, the Prophets of eight, and the Writings of eleven. In part at least the classification was historical, and rested upon a historical basis ; but in part also it was doctrinal and subservient to doctrinal theory. In the Jewish conception of doctrine and development the Law was the foundation and had priority of all. This was assumed, expounded and enforced by the Prophets, who were yet far from being mere legal exegetes, but at all times were preachers of ethical and spiritual truth, interpreters of the divine will to their own nation and to the world. And in the Writings the same essential truths of history and experience were further unfolded, with varying purpose and thought, with adaptation to the changing problems and ways of human life, with a wider outlook and forecast, and a more humane trend and feeling,—idealists no doubt many of the authors, and perhaps speculative, but never losing touch as so many of their modern successors seem to have done with the ground

beneath their feet, and finding ever in the great world of history and of men a wonderful and unique unfolding of the divine purpose and will. These writers all saw in Israel's circumstances and history not a mere succession of events, disconnected and meaningless, but the expression of the wisdom and holiness and love of the supreme God, who will and must make His will finally to prevail to the contentment and well-being of His chosen people.

It is no doubt true also that the Hebrew literature preserved from Old Testament times is only a small part of that which once existed. Its proportion to the sum total of the literary product of poets, historians, prophets, and philosophers can hardly be gauged, but is certainly not large. Much was spoken and written, which the envious centuries have carried with them into oblivion. Perhaps much of it was not worth saving. We may console ourselves for the loss in the belief, which analogy and probability would alike indicate to be entirely well-grounded, that the best has been preserved. It is the inferior and the least worthy of regard that has fallen from record and memory. It is natural to compare the literature of the Greeks. Of the numerous Greek dramatists whose names are known the extant plays are few in number, very few compared to the total output in a considerably less period of time than is covered by the Old Testament Scriptures. By general acknowledgement however the best have been spared, not forgotten or perished, and are the model and delight of countless readers and imitators to-day. Nor should it be forgotten that the sacred books of other peoples and lands have to confess the same abridgement, diminution, and

misunderstanding. The oldest part of the Avesta is but a fragment, if indeed it is a genuine fragment, of all that Zarathushtra spoke and taught. It is not to be believed that the ancient poets, the rishis of India, sang no songs save those which have been enshrined in the extant Rigveda. Even Muhammad himself must have uttered many sayings and given many instructions which the memory of his disciples failed to recall after his death, to find a place in the Qurān or recognised Traditions.

The wonder is not that so little but that so much should have survived the accidents of time and transmission, the disasters of war and exile, the ignorance and incapacity of scribes, or the unfortunate zeal of commentators and emendators. That glosses have been incorporated into the text, additions and transpositions effected, or omissions accidentally made, can hardly be doubted by any one who has studied the original. The scale on which this has taken place is undoubtedly less than in many ancient Oriental texts or in some of the Greek and Latin classics. Manuscripts were liable to be destroyed, especially in times of unrest, revolution, or war; a unique copy of an ancient work might thus perish beyond recall. Until the invention of printing the hand-to-hand reproduction of ancient and perhaps ill-written and worn texts was a matter of great difficulty, and no copyist ancient or modern is infallible. To the scrupulous care of later Jewish scholars and their zeal for the preservation and accuracy of their ancient Scriptures the Christian world owes a great debt. They could not however repair past errors, or restore what had been lost.

Accidents, confusions of order, omissions, mis-transcriptions it was beyond their power to set right. There is no reason to believe that in the schools of the Jews or by their leaders anything like what we should call a comprehensive revision of the text was essayed. They faithfully endeavoured to preserve what they had inherited, every jot and tittle thereof, and to provide definitely and finally against future errors and loss. They could not however bring back or re-create what the past centuries had let go. And the late Dr. Driver was undoubtedly justified when he expressed the judgement that previous to the determination and settlement by Jewish scholars of the so-called Massoretic text in the early centuries of the Christian era a period of laxity and comparative indifference had prevailed, during which there had been deteriora tion and loss to an extent that it is not possible now to measure.

It would indeed have been an unparalleled miracle if it had been otherwise, if the Old Testament writings had been immune during the centuries from the fallibilities of the human hand and mind. For two thousand years or more, it should be remembered, parts of them had been handed down by word of mouth or laboriously written out by scribes not always literate before the invention of printing in Europe made documents safe for the world. If no mistakes had been made during this long period, if order and authorship had remained entirely clear and unconfused, and the intelligence and responsibility of the men into whose hands the Hebrew Scriptures were from time to time delivered had been so shackled and overruled as to reduce their part and function to that

of a mere exact machine for transcribing purposes, it would have been strange and incredible beyond expression. The one God, in whom Jews and Christians alike believe, does not so deal with his sons who are his agents and give forth his Word, or confine thus their hands and minds. If the text of the Old Testament before us to-day is in parts difficult to understand, and if it sometimes suggests or affords evidence that the words we read are not in all particulars those which the prophets, historians, or poets originally wrote and spoke, this is altogether consonant with the divine procedure in the general order and regulation of the universe. Had it been otherwise, there would have been much room for the scoffer and incredulous. The value and uniqueness of the Old Testament Scriptures does not consist in verbal inerrancy.

There is therefore in these Scriptures which we read to-day in authorised and revised translations second to none in scholarly fidelity and beauty a human element which has not been overridden or suppressed by divine inspiration. And assuming that the limits within which each element, the divine and the human, has acted, were in every case strictly defined, it is nevertheless not easy perhaps not possible to express them or to set them out in order. It would not be unreasonable to maintain that a similar co-operation might be expected, and will in fact be found present in other great books, which lay claim to be or are regarded as sacred. Such a belief or claim is at least not rejected or foreclosed by anything in the Bible itself. And however the inspiration and control of the spirit in the minds and hearts of men may be understood or defined, it is clear that to limit its action and influence to the few authors

and witnesses whose words have been preserved in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and to exclude the great family of the human race, past, present, and yet to be, is not only irreconcilable with a belief in the universality of the divine love, but is not justified by anything which these books themselves imply or assert. On the contrary it is by implication repudiated, although the conception of a general or widely diffused inspiration is not within the purview of the prophets. Ascendancy or superiority in degree of inspiration may be urged or claimed, or even difference in kind, but a definition which shall deny *in toto* its possession by other writers and men of God is not justified by reason or the Scriptures; and if it were so defined, the limitations necessary would seem to deprive it of all living reality and worth. The doctrine of verbal inspiration, in which many of the Fathers of the Christian Church believed, has been shown to be untenable and has inevitably surrendered at the first shock of examination and criticism. A theory of ' plenary ' inspiration also may be able to maintain itself and to claim recognition only if it is willing to resign its exclusiveness, to make broad and wide its borders, and to concede to others, even if it be in a less high degree, the same gift of the suggestive guidance of the spirit in life and action and words. The consequences of the contrary belief were hardly realised by those who asserted it, or by those who handed it down in traditional faith.

From these writings however with their wide reach of thought and manifold diversity of circumstance and outlook, of time and even of place, it might well be

regarded as impracticable to disentangle a single and consistent thread of belief or teaching. A difference of date, that is measured by centuries, might of itself be reasonably thought to ensure a distinct line of approach to religious themes and method of dealing with spiritual problems. Each generation is inheritor of the experience and conclusions of its forerunners. This is undoubtedly true of the prophets and writers of the Old Testament. The difficulties of the application of the rule are met with in every attempted exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole, and have proved a frequent source of misunderstanding and error. They will be in constant evidence, and will call for at least an attempt at solution in all the pages that follow. That in spite of all varieties of prepossession and character, of date and environment, there is a real unity in diversity is one of the many proofs, and not the least significant, of the unifying power of a common religious faith. It was Israel's creed, taught and enforced by the leaders and prophets and writers of the nation, that made the people one and their faith one. The intrepid captain and guide of a band of fugitives from Egypt; the unknown authors of a nation's folk-lore and hymnology; the unwearied and undiscouraged preachers of divine righteousness and claims to reverence, obedience, and love; the custodians of the letter of the law, with a unique regard for its form and an unwavering belief in its inspiration; prophets and poets in exile; kings and nobles, seers, visionaries, and ascetics; statesmen and tillers of the field; these form a wonderful assembly of men of devotion and talent, consecrated to a single

aim, and concentrated within the narrow limits of what we call a single volume or book.

These writers have all made their several contributions to a mosaic, not distorted or inharmonious, but forming a single picture; and in so doing they have not abated one jot or tittle of their individuality, or allowed their capacity and talent to be submerged as it were in a drab uniformity. The picture may have lost somewhat of its brightness, the colours faded through lapse of time, the edges here and there uncertain and frayed; this at least must certainly be conceded to our own age, as we endeavour to understand the meaning and purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures through so great a vista of the centuries. And the representation that emerges is less that of a progressive national life, although this is present and is depicted by men of a convinced and earnest patriotism, than of an undivided national faith, that through all unrest, defection, and schism, attains to composure and peace. The Jewish nation has made a contribution, undeniably great, to the life of the world. Its dispersion and the maintenance by its members in the most distant lands of a separate character and individuality, while taking their full part as far as they were permitted in the business life of the community amongst whom they dwelt, have profoundly affected every civilised and many uncivilised peoples. Their incomparably greater contribution has been that of their national and religious faith. It is of course trite to repeat or to urge that Christianity was cradled and nurtured in Judaism. Jewish faith however not only laid the foundations but set the example in practical life and also in other respects, for some of which perhaps

sufficient credit has not been given by Christian teachers and leaders of thought. Had it been absent or even deficient Christianity could not humanly speaking have been what it is, nor indeed could it have been at all. Moreover the Jewish Scriptures are at once the basis, the support, and the exposition of the Jewish faith, wherein their faith securely reposes on the written testimony of priest and prophet, of lawgiver and king. That the testimony was in many perhaps in most instances originally oral does not invalidate its substance, though this fact may be responsible for changes in form and attribution. Taken as they stand, in the definite form which Jewish scholars determined for the traditional text fifteen or sixteen hundred years ago, they are the contribution of the Jewish nation to the religious history and doctrinal standards and beliefs of the human race. As such they claim and deserve the most careful examination and appraisement. Their complement moreover is the Jewish nation ; a people unique in their changeless witness to a living faith and unwavering maintenance of a moral and religious status and ideal. The separateness of the Jew throughout the centuries is to be emphasized as a religious no less than an ethnical fact. The steadfast and prolonged testimony of the people themselves, subject as they have so often been to depreciation and even bitter persecution, perhaps little less than their reverence for and care in the preservation of their sacred books, has placed the world and especially the Christian world greatly under obligation. Other racial characteristics, perhaps more prominent and less altruistic, have too often prevented the recognition of all that was due to

them from a religious standpoint. Christian obligation and indebtedness to the Jew have been seldom or never fully recognised, often perhaps not discerned or understood.

Within the limits of the Old Testament Scriptures themselves there may be discovered a distinct progress and advance in thought, sentiment, and religious doctrine. It would be strange if it were not so in a series of records covering so wide a space of time, and dealing with conditions so diverse and a constantly changing environment. The time that elapsed between the earliest and the latest compositions cannot be exactly determined. It is however to be measured of course by centuries, not merely by years. And the difficulty of tracing the internal development of thought, the firm crystallisation as it were of doctrine and belief, is enhanced in some instances by uncertainties of date of composition or chronological arrangement. If to each composition or writing of the Old Testament and to its author there could be assigned with confidence a fixed and definite date B.C., it is evident that the task of doctrinal appreciation and reconstruction would be greatly simplified. The question is one not only of order and succession, but of environment and preconception. At one epoch the writer would find himself under these circumstances and subject to these influences; at another both circumstances and influences would be found to have varied, perhaps to a very considerable extent; and no speaker or writer with an outlook on his own times and in sympathy with the needs of his people can fail to be sensitive to the pulse of the national life and to the religious movements of his day. That the

central clue or key is so firmly kept in hand throughout and so consistently maintained is no little evidence of literary ability as well of a convinced religious faith.

Moreover the greater number of the books, or distinct portions of books, are anonymous, and neither claim to be nor afford definite internal evidence of being the work of a given author. The titles of the Psalms for example have the authority of an ancient tradition, but no more. It is only in the later books that the writer discards the veil of anonymity, and names himself. It is hardly necessary to recall that this usage is on the lines of all Oriental practice and habit in early times, where ancient compositions were flung forth as it were upon the world for use or abuse without a jealous *noli me tangere* of self-assertive authorship. In many of the historical compositions also and in the later books dates are assigned, for instance to the regnal years of the rulers of Judah and Israel, which bear witness to the utmost care in tabulation and arrangement. That they are not always reliable, or have been mistakenly copied and transmitted, is evident in some instances from their mutual inconsistency. On the other hand to assume that Babylonian or Assyrian dates, as transmitted by the courtiers and annalists of these kingdoms, or the graven or written records of Egypt are necessarily correct and reliable, and that in every instance in which the biblical chronology does not agree it must be revised and corrected in the light of these is as unjustifiable as it is certain to be misleading.

A more serious and important general consideration is that the development of thought and reasoning within the Old Testament does not proceed on Western

lines or assume Western axioms and premisses. The progressive movement of Oriental reasoning is not guided or confined by European or Western rules. The difference may not be and is not easy to state or define, but it is familiar to all who have studied Oriental literature or come into close contact with Oriental peoples. To judge the Bible, either in the Old or New Testament Scriptures, by Western presuppositions and Western rules of logic will be to judge amiss. Oriental thought is not subject to the order or manner of reasoning with which the Occident is familiar, which appears to it inviolable and necessary, nor does the untrammelled Eastern thinker work along Western ways. There has been no error perhaps more fertile in misunderstanding, whether of the Hebrew Scriptures or of other Eastern books, than to assume that an Eastern writer or thinker must of necessity have reasoned as a European student or scholar of the nineteenth or twentieth century. His thought runs in an entirely different groove. To the Western thinker, when he understands the premisses and these are flawless, the conclusion follows at once and irresistibly. This compulsion of thought and inference however does not carry weight with the Oriental, and the logic which appears to render the conclusion inevitable makes no coercive appeal to his intelligence and thought. He will not improbably begin with the European conclusion, which he reaches by a kind of intuition or instinct; and the statements or propositions, which in Western conception are preliminaries or premisses, are to him an incidental and altogether later by-product as it were of the processes of his reasoning. The last is first and the first last.

And if all this appears to us to be unnatural, subversive of the logical order of things, and as a real difficulty in the way of a due comprehension and appreciation of the Old Testament, it is fair to remember that the processes of our thought and the postulates of our logic appear no less unnecessary and irrational to the Oriental.

A not unnatural consequence of this disregard of the rights of authorship, as they would be upheld in the West and in modern times, was that both the limits and language of documents were shifting and liable to change. A writer did not jealously take charge of his treatise or book in his own lifetime and forbid interference or appropriation by others. Rather was it put forth for the profit of all, all might make use thereof, and amend, vary, or suppress without question asked or acknowledgement expected. After some such method as this the Homeric poems for example have attained to their present order and form. All ancient compositions have gained and lost, more often the latter, in the course of transmission through the centuries. Engraving on stone or stamping on brick is no doubt unalterable, or liable only to very slight interference or alteration, that is usually detected with ease. And oral transmission is in many instances, especially in the East, safer and more trustworthy than writing on perishable materials. Aeneas' entreaty to the Seer to utter rather than to commit her prophecies to the eddying leaves revealed a familiar and well-grounded dread of their loss. It is probably true that documents regarded as sacred or authoritative were less subject than others to this free and irresponsible treatment. They were not however exempt. In one

respect perhaps they were even more liable to enlargement or interpolation under cover of a recognised authority or name. Even the least portion or fragment believed to be ancient and authoritative would be sedulously preserved and highly prized, and if it were anonymous and its origin uncertain might readily become attached to the writings of a well-known author, poet or prophet or sage, and pass with the rest under his name. There was of course no wrong or deceit in this, any more than in the modern *nom de plume*. It was a recognised and protective device for the preservation of great words. Such a combination moreover might be accidentally made through the copying of compositions of different authorship on one and the same length of writing material. There is no reason whatever to believe that the books of the Old Testament have suffered more from these accidents and processes than other ancient documents, sacred or profane. Probably they have suffered on the whole much less. The possibility however must not be disregarded or overlooked in its bearing on criticism and interpretation whether of date or order or authorship.

Amidst all this diversity of manner and method, of outlook, authorship, and condition, of circumstance and date, there may be traced a real unity of doctrine and thought. If this is defined to be belief in a supreme God, to whom is confided Israel's destiny, and who has cared and yet cares for Israel as a nation above all the nations of the earth, the definition would not be far wrong, but it would err both on the side of incompleteness and of overstatement. It is not easy to express or define in terms that would not lay themselves open in some respects to easy and almost

certain misinterpretation, or which would not seem more or less to read into the words of the biblical writer conceptions of later origin. If we are to call his persistent belief and presentation of doctrine monotheism, it is without doubt that the term would have conveyed to him an idea or ideas different in connotation from that which is conveyed to us. Yet it is perhaps the one word that comes nearest to a true expression of the thought which lay at the foundation of his conviction and teaching. To the earlier writers no doubt the term or the thought was less large and comprehensive than to those men whose beliefs found expression in the later books. Their doctrinal faith was in some respects less crystallized set and clear than was that of the Jews of succeeding years, whom experience had disillusioned, and exile and suffering had thrown back upon the resources of reason and of hope. Jewish theism however as it comes before us in the Old Testament, even in its earliest stages was more than a mere belief in a superhuman power, control, or guardianship. Whatever lay behind and before in the darkness of primitive superstition or the early questionings and wonder of an awakening intelligence the Old Testament writers have passed far beyond this crude and unsatisfying faith. If therefore their essential thought be understood to consist not only in belief in a supreme power, but in confidence in the rightness of his rule and the conviction that the rule thus established is and must be for final good and for the overthrow of evil, the definition will not greatly err. The belief was throughout subject to growth, modification, and change. It was never stereotyped or fixed in terminology or detail. It

gained definiteness and exactness as the fruit of wider observation and experience, and was held with varied degrees of conviction and understanding. Often obscured and in some of its aspects apparently contradicted by a hard and harsh experience, it was never let go, and finally ripened into a faith reasoned and strong that has maintained itself through centuries of weariness and persecution and wrong—a nation's faith in a nation's God.

CHAPTER II

THE LAW

THAT which we know as the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, was to the Jew the Torah, instruction and command conveyed to the nation through Moses from God Himself, its author and its end. Implied in this belief was not only the inspiration of the writer but his authority, as the medium through whom and at whose mouth God Himself spoke. Although it was obvious on consideration that the whole could not have been written by Moses as it stood, for it was not possible that he should have described the circumstances of his own death and the events immediately following as they are set forth in the last chapter of Deuteronomy ; and although to the modern reader variety of thought and purpose seem so clearly to underlie the text in different parts as to preclude belief in unity of authorship ; yet Jewish doctrine and teaching accepted and held fast to this creed of literal derivation of the Torah as a whole and in all its parts from the lips and hands of Moses. It is probable that by most Jews Mosaic authorship stated in this form is received without question at the present day. Education and study however have of course led many to adopt what would be called a more liberal view of the source

and origin of their Law. Modern criticism has assailed this ancient belief mainly on two grounds or from two points of view. The internal evidence of the books themselves both as regards the variety of style and the apparent presuppositions and outlook of the writer or writers is regarded as incompatible with a belief in a single author ; while the analogy of other ancient documents, and the hardly less than impossibility of the preservation of an original document, as postulated, through so many centuries, would seem in greater or less degree to bear out the same conclusion. Arguments such as these appeal to different minds with different degrees of conclusiveness. It would not be unfair to say that by the great majority of scholars and careful students of the Old Testament they are accepted as carrying decisive weight. Full consideration however should be given to the Jewish tradition. Its antiquity and unanimity are not lightly to be set aside. It is a factor in the case, the value of which is to be estimated, not treated as worthless or cast aside with indifference and neglect. Those probably who are best acquainted with the tenaciousness of ancient traditions will be most ready to give to it full value. It is uncertain also how far back the tradition may be carried. In this respect evidence fails. If it dates from anywhere near the Mosaic era its authority is very great. Moreover it is entirely without rival or competitor. Perhaps it would be satisfied by the hypothesis of a Mosaic nucleus of rule and law, around which in course of time were gathered narrative, epic song and tales of folk-lore, further legal enactments and ethical discourses, which all came to be attributed to and gained

prestige from the authority of a great name. The research and discoveries of the last half-century or more have not a little increased the probability that it is in this direction that a conclusion is to be sought. Although it is in the highest degree unlikely that the contribution to the whole made by the great Hebrew lawgiver can ever be delimited or its extent certainly described.

The tripartite arrangement of the books in the Hebrew Canon, which has so far been adopted in the English version, suggests further and gives expression to the belief of the Jews that the Law was first in the order of their Scriptures, and claimed priority both of the Prophets and of the Writings. It was upon the basis of the Law that their national life was constituted. The word of the Torah was an imperative divine command, the undisputed rule of life and action. The oracles of the Prophets, no less than the inspired utterances of priest and psalmist, were essentially founded upon this, and the word of the Lord as spoken by Moses was not only inwoven into the texture of their faith but often if not invariably gave tone and expression to their speech. It would seem that recent attempts to rewrite the history of Israel, painstaking and detailed as they have been, have taken insufficient account of this conviction of the Jews, and of the facts of their history and national life which continually presupposed the original foundation of the Law. If they were mistaken, it was a most extraordinary mistake to make, the origin of which and the reason for its dominant and unquestioned acceptance it is not easy to discern. The reversal of this order, which gives priority to the Prophets and

conceives of the Law as founded upon their utterances and certified by their authority, is a theory difficult to accept in the light of Jewish history and belief. Though conceived and expounded with the utmost ingenuity, learning, and diligence the theory appears to be to a large extent imaginative, and to express what in the view of its original author might be expected rather than what actually was. On the other hand no modern student, with the facts of the biblical text and of research and exposition before him, would maintain that every word of the Pentateuch as it is in our hands to-day was written or composed before any prophetic utterance had been made. Words of prophecy were combined with later strains of law and commandment, and the interplay of thought and influence was assuredly not all from one side. Essentially therefore the Jewish belief is not to be set aside or Jewish history rewritten on the hypothesis of a development which might perhaps be conceived as more complete and logical from a European point of view, but which is out of relation to the unchallenged tradition of the Jews themselves and finds no support in their expressed and unwavering belief. To the latter in particular it is right that full value should be assigned.

The discovery of very considerable similarities between the laws or codes of law set forth in the Hebrew books and legal codes which are known to have been current in Babylonia at an early age has to many students seemed to throw additional discredit on the belief in Mosaic authorship, at least in the form in which the Hebrew laws were presented in the extant Torah. The similarity often extends to the order of

enactments, as well as to the penalties involved; and is apparently altogether too close to be due to accident or to the development of judicial thought on parallel lines. In particular the detailed and famous Code of Law of the great Babylonian king, Ḥammurabi, *circa* 2000 B.C. seemed to present an obvious and easy source of Hebrew legislation, on the assumption that it was developed and took form comparatively late in the history of the nation, and did not spring full-grown from the mind and thought of a single leader or lawgiver, who brought the people out of Egypt. It would seem indeed sufficiently remarkable, if Moses were the author of the legislation, that the parallelism in form and thought should be altogether with Babylon and not with Egypt. The claim was made that if Hebrew legislation as a whole, not precluding a partial or preliminary statement which was afterwards superseded or the survival of earlier enactments which were adapted or modified in the later form, originated in the main in monarchic or exilic times a satisfactory explanation of its form and contents would at once and naturally present itself.

It has become evident however that the Babylonian legislation itself, in so far at least as it found expression in the Code of Ḥammurabi, was by no means so original and independent as at one time it was supposed to be. Fragments of other codes exist, the relation of which to that of the Babylonian king remains to be determined. The Code issued in his name and by his authority was to some extent at least, as might have been anticipated, a compilation from pre-existing rules of procedure and traditional demands of justice or right; and the proportion of the enactments therein contained

which is original, if indeed any of the laws are, is wholly uncertain. A further and most interesting discovery is that of an ancient Sumerian code, broken and incomplete in its surviving form, written in the language and belonging to the people who according to the generally accepted view preceded the Semites in Babylonia, and were their teachers in so much of art and literature and in the life of culture and civilisation. The means of determining the date of the Sumerian code are at present lacking. It at least carries back the existence of written law and requirement to a very early age. Ḥammurabi in his day was evidently not the first to engrave laws for the guidance and control of the people of the land over which he held sway.

The likeness between these various ethical and legal judgements and rules seems to be too close to be accidental. There are however more ways than one in which it may be explained. The conclusion that the Israelite code or codes are directly dependent on Babylonia is not the only possible method of accounting for the similarity. In most instances of literary parallelism it is difficult to decide or detect on which side the indebtedness lies. For more reasons than one it is improbable that the Babylonian code should be under direct debt to Israel, although later interchange of thought and perhaps phraseology is not to be excluded. On the other hand considerations of chronology, of time and place, apart from the general relation of the two peoples, seem to render it certain that the closer resemblance between the Babylonian code and its predecessor or predecessors is due to the direct adoption of Sumerian system and rules. And the connection

which appears to exist between the former and the systems or codes of law that have been preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures is more probably to be otherwise explained than on a hypothesis of immediate borrowing, at least in the first instance. That a common background of thought and expression, whether oral or written, lies behind them, can hardly be denied. The limits however of originality or dependence do not admit with our present knowledge of exact determination. Possibly future discoveries will provide the means for a more considered and definite judgement.

It is of interest also to remember that Babylonia is not the only ancient land to whose legal precepts and procedure parallels may be found in the Mosaic laws. Undoubtedly the resemblance here is the most noteworthy and far-reaching, due in no inconsiderable part to the Semitic origins and characteristics of the two peoples ; a common origin and background which found expression on the legal side in similar enactments. In the old Indian Codes of Law and to a lesser extent in the Confucian and other ancient books of China may be traced many likenesses in trend of thought and aim ; although resemblances of language and expression are more rarely found, owing to the differing habits and point of view of the Far Eastern peoples. An exact and detailed comparison has not been instituted or at least has not been published. Recent discoveries moreover have provided evidence of a close connection, literary, religious, and artistic, between India and the lands of the Nearer East in the centuries B.C., which may well be of decisive importance in our estimate of legal inspiration and source A final

verdict must wait for future light ; which will certainly be forthcoming, although to what extent and in what direction it is impossible to foretell. Meanwhile it is well to bear in mind that these questions of date and origin and source neither invalidate nor confirm the supreme moral value of Hebrew precept and truth.

In the early history of Israel no question of date or circumstance has aroused greater interest than that of the Exodus from Egypt ; and the details of the narrative as recorded in the second of the Mosaic books have been keenly scrutinised both by those who maintain the essential veracity and reliabilty of the biblical story and by those who assail and reject its historical worth. The latter have to face *in limine* the determined and universal belief of the Jews themselves in the deliverance from Egypt, the constant appeal thereto of the prophets as a motive of conduct and national life, and the facts of ritual and observance which are or claim to be based upon it. These things need to be taken into account, and have not always been sufficiently considered by those who have denied the truth of the biblical narrative, or from the Egyptian side have regarded its details as improbable. The vividness and picturesqueness of the biblical story beginning with the lives of the patriarchs, the harmonious setting and colouring of Eastern manners and life, the tact and wise counsel and skill of the leader of the people, the impatience and disloyal ambitions of some of his coadjutors and followers, these never fail to interest and attract, and would not forfeit either their attractiveness or their interest if the whole were proved to have no foundation in fact. And the last scene on

the lonely mountains of Moab, with the aged captain's gaze over the confines of the promised land, the soil of which it was not given to him to tread, is almost unique in its combined pathos and resignation. 'No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' It is not an unfair comparison that has sometimes been drawn, or without suggestiveness, with that other lonely grave on the Matoppo Hills in South Africa.

There is a curious vagueness also in some respects in the biblical narrative which adds to the difficulty of synchronizing its events with the known facts of Egyptian history. Names both of places and persons are often given, but the name of the ruler whom Joseph served is withheld. He is Pharaoh, nothing more. So also the names of the Oppressor of Israel, and of the king who pursued the fleeing people to the Red Sea, are not stated. This reticence has been explained, perhaps not very convincingly, on the theory that the narrator was interested only in the persons and fortunes of Israel, and was wholly indifferent to Egyptian titles and dynasties, not troubling to record them. The only direct clue which the narrative seemed to afford was in the name of one of the store-cities built for Pharaoh by the oppressed people. It was a not unnatural inference that the king who caused a town Raamses to be built for himself was giving it his own name, and that the ruler accordingly was one of the long line of Rameses who held the sceptre over Egypt in the thirteenth and following centuries before Christ. And if this inference was legitimate then it would seem to follow that this all-powerful king was probably Rameses II, the greatest of the line, who

filled Egypt with his statues and temples and palaces, perhaps as great in the arts of peace as a conqueror in war. It is an interesting and probably significant fact that in the course of the excavations at Bethshan in the north of Palestine a stele of this king has recently been discovered, celebrating his victories, and recording that the king employed foreign and captive labour in the erection of his cities in Egypt. The reference is unique, the only statement of this character contained in an Egyptian inscription. It is natural to connect the statement with the biblical record. The theory that the Pharaoh who put the Israelites to hard service in brickmaking and the building of treasure-cities was Rameses the Great has commended itself to the majority of biblical scholars and students, who have found therefore in his successor Merneptah, who reigned as an old man towards the end of the thirteenth century B.C., the Pharaoh from whose dominion the children of Israel made their escape out of Egypt under Moses. The theory is not without difficulties, nor is it undisputed. If it is correct it will serve to date within a few years the life of Moses and the Exodus from the land of bondage.

There are difficulties of another kind in connection with the route followed by the Israelites on leaving Egypt and during their prolonged journeyings to the land of promise. The difficulties for the most part however are due not to indefiniteness or meagre detail on the part of the historian, but to our ignorance of the localities. The narrative is abundantly furnished with names of places, camping-grounds, and details of travel, but these cannot in general be understood or identified with certainty. Names moreover are almost as much

subject to distortion in the process of transmission and reproduction as numbers, and the records of the Exodus have not entirely escaped the errors to which human speech and pen are liable. These again however we can often neither detect not correct. If the names and places could all be identified beyond doubt, there would be before us a complete and exact narrative of travel, which would be of the utmost geographical as well as historical interest. The arguments *pro* and *con* of the various theories that have been advanced are beyond the scope of the present discussion, and need not be set down. Briefly however it may be recalled that three alternative and different routes have been considered to offer a fair interpretation of the biblical narrative, and to give a more or less probable view of the events as they happened. The elements of conjecture in each case are large, especially in regard to the identification of names and places. No locality on the route of the Exodus can be said to be certainly or exactly determined, not even Sinai, until Kadesh Barnea is reached on the southern border of the promised land. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the place which was in the mind of the narrator, when he brought the children of Israel to the sanctuary of Barnea,[1] which was to be the centre of their tribal and national life during their long wanderings in the desert.

The traditional and accepted route of the journeyings of the Israelite tribes under the leadership of Moses, which crosses the line of the present Suez Canal at or a little south of the Bitter Lakes, and turns south-east

[1] The meaning and origin of the name are entirely unknown.

and east into the heart of the Sinaitic Peninsula, has indeed little to recommend it beyond the fact that it is the route supported by tradition. To that tradition much greater weight would attach if it crystallized and preserved Jewish belief from the earliest times. Of this however there seems to be no trace, either within or outside of the pages of Scripture. The tradition is wholly of Christian origin, and can claim no earlier birth than about the fourth century of our era, when Christian monks and anchorites settled in the peninsula and apparently sought to give sanctity to their new residence by associating it with the great divinely-guided events of olden times. Jebel Musa, Jebel Serbal, and Mt. Catherine compete for the honour of having been the scene of the giving of the Law ; and the claims or suitability of other less-known peaks have been maintained by various inquirers or travellers. There is no evidence of the existence of the tradition at an earlier date ; and the gap therefore between its appearance and the events themselves is long. A further argument takes the form that the Sinaitic Peninsula had for many centuries been an appanage of the kingdom of Egypt. Valuable mines were worked there, and garrisons of Egyptian soldiers maintained. That the fugitive tribes should adopt a course which would lead them straight into the hands of their old taskmasters would appear to be the reverse of probable. The force of the argument can only be met on the hypothesis that at this particular time the hold of Egypt over the peninsula was relaxed or altogether abandoned. It is possible that an answer of this nature is relevant ; but it is clearly dependent on the date assigned to the Exodus. Moreover the biblical

narrative shows no consciousness that the land through which the Israelites journey is Egyptian territory. It is apparently uninhabited except by nomad tribes such as the Amalekites who swoop down upon the invaders of their valleys and scanty pasturages. If Merneptah is the Pharaoh of the Exodus it is worth notice that his reign has afforded the only known inscription of Egypt which makes direct mention of Israel.[1] The statement of the king or of his courtier scribes appears to assert the presence of Israel already in Palestine. This is not in disagreement with the biblical narrative, if we may assume that the name is used in the Egyptian records with a wider connotation than it carries in the Bible, and has reference to a tribe or tribes of similar origin but not identical with the descendants of Jacob who went down into Egypt. It is not a matter upon which the engraver of the inscription was likely to be well informed.

Alternative suggestions which have been made with regard to the route of the Israelites on their departure from Egypt follow with slight variations one or other of two well-marked lines of road. The most natural would appear to be that which assumes that after the passage of the Red Sea Moses led the host in his charge directly eastward by the way that was already familiar to him from the time when he fled from Pharaoh to the land of Midian, by which they would

[1] Upon a stele of black granite ten feet high on which is inscribed the king's hymn of victory. The reference to Israel seems to suggest that they form a recognised element of the population of Palestine, but this inference if correct is not inconsistent with the supposition that some related tribes might be found at the same time in Egypt: 'The Hittite land is pacified; plundered is the Canaan, with every evil; carried off is Ascalon, seized upon is Gezer, Yenoam is made as a thing not existing; Israel is desolated, her seed is not, Palestine has become a [defenceless] widow for Egypt.' See J. H. Breasted, *History of Egypt*, p. 459 ff. Breasted's date for the reign of Merneptah is 1225 to 1215 B.C.

with the shortest possible delay pass beyond the limits of Egyptian authority and influence, and place a pathless desert between themselves and any pursuers. The road is an ancient and much-traversed caravan route from Egypt to the head of the Gulf of Akaba, and is the line followed by the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca. This route would seem to offer to the Israelites the speediest way of escape from the dangers of interference and re-capture.

Others have abandoned the traditional belief regarding the passage of the Red Sea, and have supposed that the crossing of the waters was effected in the north at or near the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile, whence the people followed the coast-line in a north-easterly direction to the borders of Palestine. This was the near way of the land of the Philistines (Ex. xiii. 17), and offered of course the shortest and most direct road between Egypt and Syria. It is clear that the writer of the biblical narrative wished to exclude this route, and he gives reason to show why it was not adopted by the Israelites: 'lest the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt.' It was the almost immemorial highway of armies from the north or south, traversed often by the troops of Pharaoh and by invading hosts who sought to despoil Egypt. On this route a fugitive band, unused to war, would be in constant danger of surprise and destruction; and this thought was in the mind of the writer of the narrative in the book of Exodus.

A certain decision between conflicting views does not appear to be practicable. Nor is it likely that excavation or research will be able to render much help. As has been indicated, serious objections may be urged

against the traditional belief; and the route by the shores of the Mediterranean can only be upheld by disregarding the express statement and intention of the biblical historian. On the whole the direct route eastwards across the base of the Sinaitic Peninsula seems most probable, but no more than probability can be claimed for it. A few commentators or students cut easily the Gordian knot by denying altogether the truth of the story of the Exodus or of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, which they regard as an unfounded myth.

Were it necessary to add a few words with regard to the historical accuracy in general or in detail of the narratives and stories of Genesis and of the following books, it would be perhaps to the following effect. That no reasonable theory of inspiration demands belief in the form or details of patriarchal or other histories, that have been transmitted through the centuries and chronicled in the written books. That the transmission of these should have been faultless, incurring no loss and accepting no modification, is incredible, and would be a miracle for which there is no precedent or justification in the divine character or government of the universe; that the figures given and the dates suggested or involved are often demonstrably wrong; and that nothing lends itself less to orderly and precise transmission than numbers. In other respects also tradition, whether oral or written, as those who have had most to do with it well know, presents no credentials of infallibility. Its liability to error must not however be exaggerated or its testimony rejected as of no account; and it is worth while therefore to point out that to refuse all

credit to tradition is as unjustified as to accept all its assertions without discrimination. Similar considerations call for recognition elsewhere and often. The patriarchal narratives are instinct with a local character and colouring, which it would have been most difficult for an inventor in later centuries to reproduce. As a whole they are convincing in their directness and simplicity. The experiences of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt and the pictures of Court and country life are at least in accord with probability, as far as they can be tested; and are not discredited by the fact that native Egyptian stories have been preserved which bear a certain resemblance to the stories in the Hebrew books. The latter are incomparably the more vivid and picturesque. Into the difficult and complicated questions of ethnology, archaeology, science, and research of every kind that are involved it is not practicable to enter here. The history and life of antiquity have been opened out and enriched by scholarship and discovery in a way that only a few decades ago would have been thought almost impossible. It is not too much to say that the good faith and general reliability of the biblical writers have been by every advance in knowledge brought into stronger relief.

Who these writers were in the earliest times we have no means of ascertaining or except within very general limits at what period they lived and worked. That Moses himself composed or wrote the five books that pass under his name as they exist to-day is not credible. But that a part at least of their substance possibly also of their form is due to him is probable; and that they are throughout

informed by his spirit is most certain. The tradition of his authorship is perhaps due in the first instance to this consideration, and later crystallized into the long prevalent belief that the whole was formally the production not only of his mind but of his pen. The books themselves do not of course make any such claim to authorship or authority, and careful examination of their text has brought into prominence literary features and differences of apprehension and statement which in their entirety seem decisive against the conception of a single author responsible for the whole. On the details of the theory which has been advanced to explain the literary and other features which the books present it is neither feasible nor necessary here to enlarge. A brief reference to it however appears needful for the due apprehension of the significance and scope of the prophetic life and work. The theory is essentially that the Pentateuch in its present form is due for the most part to four authors, or perhaps schools of combined or associated authorship, whose date and relationship are determined in general terms, and whose work originally independent was later brought together and combined by men of the same race working under similar conditions and with a similar purpose. The authorship of the Mosaic books thus conceived would present a close analogy with the mode of composition of other ancient books, and is entirely consonant to the ideas and thoughts of ancient peoples as far as we are able to ascertain them. To the authors or schools thus conceived certain conventional letters have been assigned, to facilitate brief reference to them, and to enable discussion and investigation to be carried on,

which without a working theory would be difficult or perhaps impossible. As such it has been accepted by most biblical scholars and students, and made the basis of much fruitful study and thought. Unfortunately the theory has sometimes been treated and written about as though it were on a level with the facts themselves. It is merely a hypothesis, formulated with the view of giving a reasonable account of the form and facts of the extant documents, as scientific hypotheses attempt to co-ordinate and account for scientific facts; and like them it is acceptable and assured only in so far as it is successful in this aim. When a more harmonious and far-reaching hypothesis can be stated, the former and inadequate supposition becomes antiquated and is discarded. Such has been the history of all true and reasonable investigation. The facts remain, whether literary or scientific. Progress in their interpretation is made by the aid of successive theories, each more comprehensive and complete than its predecessor. It is a mistake to regard the current theory of biblical composition as either final or infallible. It is equally a mistake to assail those who accept and hold it as though they were undermining the foundations of the faith.

In addition to these four authors or 'schools' it is generally believed that at a later date or dates other Jewish scholars undertook the task of bringing together and uniting their compositions into one whole. The work, so far as we are able to test it, was carried out in a reverent spirit and with exact and painstaking care. The fruit of all their labours is the Torah or Pentateuch, as we read it

to-day, handed down through many generations of scribes and repeaters, with its manifold interest and permanent worth.

Within the limits of the Pentateuch itself there is a manifest difference of form and design, and apparently of purpose, between the last book and those that have preceded it. Apart from the narrative contained in the first three and the last chapters of this book, which seem to be of the nature of introduction and conclusion, a sort of framework within which the picture is set, the book consists of much more than the restatement of law and precept, from which it takes its name. It is described in chap. xvii. 18 as a ' repetition of this law,' which is to be written on a scroll or book and carefully preserved for the instruction of future generations. It is not quite clear whether by this expression the writer intended to refer to the whole of Deuteronomy excluding the historical narrative or only to a part or parts of it. By those who accept the hypothesis to which reference is made above it is generally believed that there was in his mind a central portion or code of laws, chaps. xii.–xxvi., the nucleus of a larger whole ; and this code is then identified with the law-book discovered in the Temple at Jerusalem by Hilkiah the high priest in the reign of King Josiah. ' The book of the law ' as it is there called is not further described, but the reform initiated and carried through by the king is in its essence in harmony with the rules and legislation of Deuteronomy, correcting practices and observances which were contrary thereto, and which had become prevalent owing to ignorance of the law's requirements. Quite unjustifiably doubt has been cast on the reliability and good faith of the

narrative in 2 Kings xxii., xxiii. The discovery is in itself sufficiently probable during the repair of an ancient structure, as a 'foundation deposit' or otherwise; and that it should have been ignored and its contents forgotten during the troublous times through which Israel and Judah had passed would be an almost certain result from the difficulties of preservation and the scarcity of copies. Of its real antiquity there are no means of judging. The king and his court accepted it as genuine and old. If according to a common ancient practice it had been laid in the foundations at the time of the building of the Temple, this copy was at least as old as Solomon's reign. This conclusion however if it were justified, and it can never of course be more than a probable conjecture, except so far as it offers a *terminus a quo* for its composition gives no clue to the age of the book or its authorship. It might justly be maintained that the older the book the more probable it would appear to be that in whole or in part its contents are to be traced back to the work and authority of the great lawgiver himself.

That Moses should have been the author of Deuteronomy is not precluded by the fact that in the book itself he is habitually referred to in the third person 'Moses spake.' Eastern habit would allow, would perhaps favour composition of this nature, where the writer does not directly obtrude his personality. Neither is the variant style absolutely conclusive, although the difference of character and vocabulary and manner of writing from the first four books is so great as to render it very difficult to maintain a theory of unity of authorship. An Eastern writer of ability is

more versatile and changeable in his style and varies between wider limits than his Western rival. If the form of Deuteronomy be considered rather than its substance, it does not seem likely that that form has been impressed upon the book by Moses himself. That in substance however some at least of its moral and legal ordinances had their origin with him is a just and probable conclusion. Beyond this it does not seem practicable to go.

The book of Deuteronomy deservedly calls for admiration on account of its high moral tone, its eloquent and generous exhortations to virtue and to a right attitude towards God. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' may be described as the key-note of the book; and this duty is urged upon the hearer or reader as one demanding the fullest devotion of every faculty mental as well as moral and spiritual, 'with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength.' It is therefore no arid law-book or series of commandments enumerated each with the appropriate penalty for its violation; and in this it differs from all ancient codes of law that have been wholly or partially brought into comparison. It is an earnest and warm-hearted exhortation to devotion and the service of God. For the most part the legal enactments upon which the exhortations of the writer are based are restatements of rules or laws laid down in the earlier Mosaic books; but there are not a few that are new or supplementary, drawn probably from the same source or sources as those already recorded. The book is therefore correctly described as a repetition or copy of this law (Deut. xvii. 18). It is not a second Law, but a renewal or recapitulation

of the first[1]; and as such it answers entirely to its designation. These laws and the relation of Israel thereto are made the basis of eloquent and forceful exhortations to duty and service, uttered by or placed on the lips of Moses as the typical lawgiver and intermediary between God and his people. The author is a preacher of righteousness, strict and fervent, intolerant of wrong done to the Lord in thought or word, and with a heart full of love for the people whom he desired to reform and lead in the right way. That the style is entirely distinct from that of the preceding books with their historical narratives, their legal and ritual injunctions, is evident. It might be contended that even so great a difference is not absolutely or necessarily inconsistent with unity of authorship. It must be admitted however that the latter position is one not easy to argue or maintain.

The essential value however of the Hebrew Books of the Law and of their prophetic teaching or origin is not dependent on theories of composition or authorship. The books are anonymous as far as direct assertion of authorship is concerned; and were the most perverse theory of their composition adopted, which dissected them into larger or smaller anonymous fragments pieced together by an anonymous joiner, it would rather enhance the miracle of their almost perfect adaptation and their spiritual worth. Deuteronomy might not unfairly be regarded as the summary and application of the

[1] The title of the book, derived from the Greek version of the passage referred to (*γράψει αὐτῷ τὸ δευτερονόμιον τοῦτο εἰς βιβλίον*, Deut. xvii. 18), is responsible for the mistaken idea that a second or different law is intended. Whether it was the purpose of the Greek translator to convey this meaning may be doubted. There can be no doubt as to the significance of the original text, or the correspondence of the contents of the book of Deuteronomy as a whole to the definition thus proposed.

whole. In all the commandments and precepts, in the choice and divine guidance of Israel or in the journeyings of patriarchs and tribes, it is the moral and spiritual purpose upon which stress is laid. It is in this that the permanent value for mankind of the Mosaic writings consists. They are informed throughout by spiritual intention and design ; nor is this evanescent, passing away and antiquated with the centuries. Were the Torah merely chronicle and narrative with no thought beyond that of recording historical events and the fate of peoples it would nevertheless retain its interest as a story of the past and a picture of men and manners that have contributed to the formation of the world that now is. Its literary charm and the energy and eloquence of its diction would not be altogether forfeited with the loss of its spiritual meaning. It is the latter however that gives to the whole its educative worth, and makes the Pentateuch not a mere literary and historical document of beauty and skill, but a memorial and lesson that men will not willingly let die.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETS

THE Jewish Canon of prophetical Scripture, or it would perhaps be more correct to write the Hebrew Canon, is both inclusive and exclusive of books which are regarded as prophetic in the English Bible. The latter derives both its nomenclature and order of the books ultimately from the Greek through Jerome and the Latin Version. And while the Reformers rejected the Apocrypha and some additions to the text of certain books which the Greek or Alexandrian Canon accepts they adhered in the main to the order of the Latin or Greek, perhaps because of its familiarity. The source of the additions and the reasons for their incorporation in the text are in most instances altogether obscure. It might therefore not unfairly be maintained that there is a twofold tradition of the Canon, Hebrew and Greek. The former however is incontestably superior and has the greater right to be regarded as original. All Protestant theologians and scholars unite in refusing a place within the Old Testament Canon to the Apocryphal books. In the texts of the accepted books themselves however there are not unimportant variations between the Hebrew and Greek forms. It would be altogether unjustifiable to assume that

in every instance where differences exist the Hebrew text is superior and has preserved the true tradition against its rival, and Protestant scholars do not so maintain.

The eight books of the Prophets in the Jewish Canon, which follow consecutively on the five books of the Law, were divided into two groups of four, the Former and the Latter Prophets (נְבִיאִים רִאשֹׁנִים and נְבִיאִים אַחֲרֹנִים). The first group consisted of the books Joshua to 2 Kings inclusive, 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings being each combined into one book, and written ordinarily in the Hebrew MSS. without division or recommencement. These are rather historical than prophetic in the modern sense of the term. The Jews however did not desire or essay to write history, as history is now conceived, as an impartial record of events as they took place. They neither were nor professed to be impartial. To them all history and especially the history of the chosen people was prophecy ; or in other words it set forth the meaning and purpose of the divine will as executed on and among the nations, and vindicated His moral character and the justice of His rule. They therefore selected for record the events that most fully and fruitfully illustrated this, and the biographies of their heroes and kings were summarised from this point of view. An illustration is the invasion of Western Palestine under Joshua. There is no connected or detailed narrative. Some of the events upon which we should desire information are passed over in silence ; of others the salient points of the narrative are sketched in, the circumstances or background are assumed to be known, and later readers are left to piece together details

as best they may. The title of ' Prophets ' as applied to these books did not connote authorship, asserting that they were written or composed by prophets. It had reference to their contents, experience or if we prefer to call it so history proclaiming the righteous purpose and will of God and vindicating the divine ways unto man.

It is a mistake to suppose that the title conveyed in any way to the Jews themselves the conception of the foretelling of future events or that this was supposed to be the office or function of a ' prophet.' This thought was a foreign importation, and only late in their history took root and prevailed more or less over the old conception. And the difficulty in which the people found themselves when they attempted to apply the principle to discriminate true from false prophets is effectively illustrated by the well-known passage in Jeremiah : ' when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him ' (chap. xxviii. 9). It is evident that the test was unavailing for those to whom the prophecies were uttered. The speaker might be justified or he might be discredited in the future, but in neither case had his immediate audience or contemporaries any decisive criterion by which to satisfy themselves as to his trustworthiness and veracity. In truth there was no word in the Hebrew language to express ' prophet ' as denoting one who possessed a special knowledge of the future, and was able to communicate details of coming events. Neither of the two chief Hebrew words, rendered in our English version ' prophet ' and ' seer ' (1 Sam. ix. 9), connoted special ability to penetrate the secrets of the future ;

and the early heroes of Israelite history to whom the title was given, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Samuel, Elijah, and many others, neither claimed nor were understood to possess knowledge of the future beyond the ken of ordinary men. They were preachers, and in a special sense representatives, communicants of the divine will, and enjoying His favour. In this their power lay, their insight, and their ability. Both titles also seem apparently in some instances at least to have carried with them in the belief of the common people, and to have been attached to the persons of the 'prophets' as possessing powers of the nature of 'second-sight,' 'thought-reading,' or the like. Especially the title 'seer' connoted originally mental or spiritual capacity of vision beyond the ordinary habit or power of mankind; and like the Indian *ṛishis* this class was set apart in distinction and honour. Later the word would seem to have depreciated in meaning, and the writer in the book of Samuel explains that it is in his time superseded by the title 'prophet.'

This last term is Greek. No more however in that language than in Hebrew did 'prophet' originally denote one whose chief function was to foretell, with the power to read the book of the future as most men read the past. It would seem indeed as though a comparatively late misunderstanding had gained possession of the word and imposed a new connotation. A prophet is one who 'tells forth' the eternal truth and the will of God; and the significance of his declaration is as independent of time, as indifferent to mere 'foretelling,' as truth and the divine will are permanent and unchanging.

It was the unmatched glory of the Hebrew prophets that they proclaimed this divine purpose, the righteousness and sovereign claims of the one God, with unwavering constancy and unique insight. And it is the misfortune of our own time that finding ourselves with very limited powers to forecast the future we have discarded at the same time belief in the reality and inspiration of prophecy.

In these books therefore there is no settled or detailed history, no history at all as the word is now understood. It is worth while moreover to remember that the conception of the impartial historian with a complete grasp of the facts on every side and a mature judgement unswayed by prejudice or passion is a comparatively modern growth. The prophets and writers of the Old Testament books make no such claim. They deal with events allusively, often assuming much knowledge on the part of their readers, and making selection at greater or less length of episodes or biographical narrative which would tend to edification or serve to point a moral. That the same event should be recorded from different points of view and with variant details as the tradition had been preserved did not disturb them. It was their task to indicate the guiding hand of Jehovah, his ever-present justice and active government. All these things add to the difficulties of interpretation, when the endeavour is made to construct an intelligible and consistent narrative of events as they actually happened. The attempt not seldom founders on our inevitable ignorance ; and the fault is often laid at the door of the Hebrew writers, and they are blamed for not doing what they never designed or professed to do.

The difficulties of construction and interpretation are enhanced by variations in the texts themselves, destruction of MSS. and interruption of tradition during the long-drawn-out centuries, and by the inevitable failures and shortcomings of the most careful copyists. Much indeed has been lost beyond possibility of recovery. Archaeology and research have reconstructed much from external sources. We may well be thankful for their aid and the firmer foundations upon which they have enabled us to take our stand.

In the later books of the four a more detailed and consecutive narrative is given, and there is at least the appearance of a well-thought-out and consistent scheme of chronology, within which the events and regnal years of the kings of Israel and Judah find a place. The moral moreover is more definitely and pointedly drawn, repeatedly in the same or similar phrase, and condemnation of evildoing is more outspoken, recurrent, and emphatic ; as though the writer or writers had taken a more decisive stand against all that they saw to be hurtful or wrong in the lives and conduct of the kings or people. That this is not a complete or exhaustive account of their motives and attitude is of course evident. The system of chronology moreover which they present considered from a general point of view is not free from difficulty ; and we do not know on what principles it was constructed or by what means it was traditionally preserved. It has been too hastily assumed that wherever the biblical record is at variance with Babylonian or Assyrian calculations or *data*, the former is in fault and must give way. There is no *a priori* reason

for crediting the Assyrian scribe with impartial judgement or exemption from liability to error. If he made a mistake however in brick or stone, it was stereotyped for all future time.

It may perhaps be thought strange that the books of Chronicles are not included in the same part or volume as 1, 2 Kings. In the Hebrew Bible they occupy the last place, closing the Canon. In the Alexandrian or Greek Church the order of the books was altered, and Chronicles was moved forward to the position following Kings which it holds in all modern Bibles with the exception of those intended exclusively for the use of Jews. A fuller consideration of the Jewish order in this instance and of the re-arrangement in the Greek Canon must be deferred. It is evident however that one and perhaps the chief reason was the comparatively late origin of these books, and that the Canon of the Prophets was closed, at least as regards its former part, before the books of Chronicles attained the form in which they are now known or an acknowledged position of authority in the community of the Jews.

The distinction between history and prophecy, so sharply defined for us, had no existence or meaning to the Jewish writer. Each was the expression and working out of the divine will in human affairs, of the thought and purpose of Him with whom there is no past or present or to come, but all is His creation and is by Him sustained. History is the expressed will and intention of God in the past ages of the world, that past which the Jew conceived not as flung behind him and out of sight, but as outstretched before him, for him to survey at leisure and learn its lessons ; and the

future came creeping up behind, unseen and unknown, until it overtook the wanderer in life's way, and passing by him became in its turn the known present and the settled or concluded past—a blank until it reached him where he stood, and entered the region of his comprehension and knowledge, the now and then of his human experience. Prophecy as it concerned the future did no more than illuminate this expanse of the unknown, throw fitful gleams of light into the unseen, showing that the principles of divine rule remained there also sovereign and immutable, and declaring that the voice of God would speak throughout the centuries in the same accents of justice, holiness, and love. The prophet's chief interest and duty lay always in the present, as preacher of righteousness to the men of his own day, and interpreter not of far-distant conditions whether past or future, but of those with which his hearers or readers were in touch, and of the events and circumstances in which they were involved. If in a real sense he stood between men and God it was because his inspired insight enabled him to trace the divine ways, and his conviction of the truth and changelessness of God assured him that evildoing whether in his own or any other nation would incur the divine wrath and suffer punishment, and that righteous dealing would come to its own, and be unerringly vindicated on the earth. His concern was not to unravel or disclose the secrets of the future, but to expand the meaning and enforce the lessons of present individual and national experience.

It is thus and from this point of view that the four 'Latter Prophets' of the Hebrew Canon teach and

write. They are, in the order named, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve, i.e. the twelve Minor Prophets as we are accustomed to call them united into one book. It is illustrative of the real significance of prophecy that the only book of the Old Testament which is 'prophetic' in the later and narrower sense of the word, and which professes to rehearse and disclose the future, the book of Daniel, does not find a place among the Prophets according to the Jewish order, nor are passages from its text read in the synagogues among the Haphtaroth, or lessons from the Prophets for the Sabbath and other services. The Jewish rule and the incorporation of the book in the third division of the Canon, among the Writings, though mainly due no doubt to its late origin, can hardly have been uninfluenced by this view of its contents. It was not regarded as prophetic as the great leaders of Jewish life and thought had been prophets.

The book of 'The Twelve,' it is not unnatural to assume, consists of fragments saved from the wreck of a much larger prophetic literature and united together into one volume or roll, it may have been for the sake of convenience or easy preservation. This would not imply that Hosea or Amos, for instance, spoke or wrote no more than is here preserved; or that other prophets known or unknown did not teach or proclaim truths worthy to be heard and remembered. The probability is all the other way. The names of these have come down to us attached to a few brief chapters, eloquent of ancient conditions and great men, often difficult of interpretation because they speak a language and breathe a spirit remote

from that of our own day. The consideration of these must be deferred. The justification however of a reference so far to the subject is this, that if twelve compositions or parts might be united together under one title, it would seem not altogether unnatural to suppose that the same process may have been at work elsewhere, portions of perhaps unknown origin joined on to an existing work and becoming absorbed with it into one literary whole. If by some accident the volume of 'The Twelve' had come down to us without names of authors or internal divisions, it would not have been difficult from considerations of style, &c., to detect the several parts, and to assign them with a fair measure of confidence to the epoch and environment to which they belonged. Anonymous writings would have a natural tendency to attach themselves to great names. We know or can know very little indeed of such processes, if they were at work, or of their consequences. It is not unreasonable however to suppose that there may be instances whether among The Twelve or elsewhere where a single name covers parts or portions due to a different author. This would neither impair nor enhance the spiritual value of the combined work. The fact, if fact it were, would be ascertained or verified by literary considerations and tests. The spiritual worth and significance of the text would remain the same, or rather would gain by being placed in a true and more definite light.

By universal consent Isaiah is the greatest of Israel's Prophets, preacher, patriot, statesman, confidential adviser of kings, interpreter of the divine character and will, steadfast upholder of truth and right. Even

those who would assign to the Great Unknown, the so-called Deutero-Isaiah, a matchless force and eloquence in pathos and pleading, would hardly place him, of whom we know nothing save as he expresses himself in undying words, above the son of Amoz. There is in truth no useful comparison between them, so dissimilar are they in circumstances and temperament. Of Isaiah himself comparatively little is known, nothing indeed beyond the self-revelation of his book. Tradition records the manner of his death; and this is supposed to be referred to by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ἐπρίσθησαν, xi. 37). Of the correctness or otherwise of the tradition it is not possible to judge. The personal narrative closes with an interview with King Hezekiah, in which Isaiah shows to the Jewish king the ruinous folly of the exhibition of his treasures to the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan the king of Babylon.[1] It will lead to the overthrow of his dynasty and the destruction of his kingdom. Hezekiah seems to be content that the disaster should be postponed to the days of his posterity, and that peace is secure for himself during his reign. It is doubtful if this reading of the attitude of the king is justified by the actual text.

Of the text itself as distinct from the subject matter it may be said that the book of Isaiah does not lend itself throughout to easy rendering into another tongue; and of certain passages even of the English Authorised Version the assertion has been made not

[1] Merodach-Baladan II is supposed to have occupied the Babylonian throne on two separate occasions, at an interval of some eight or nine years. If the embassy to Jerusalem was sent during the second brief and troubled period, the date would be *circa* 702 B.C.

unkindly or unsympathetically that the sonorous dignity of the language conceals an almost entire ignorance of the writer's real thought. Nor can it be denied that at times the meaning and intention of some of these ancient writers altogether elude us, their modern students and would-be interpreters. The facile method of evasion of difficulty which is adopted by many, and which cannot be too strongly deprecated, is to emend or otherwise alter the author's text. It is true that Isaiah has not been altogether well served by those who have recorded his utterances ; and the difficulties of interpretation and of final or definite understanding are sometimes enhanced or rendered insuperable by the errors into which a not faultless tradition and transmission have fallen. The passages which lend themselves to legitimate revision in the light of the Versions and moderate criticism are not after all numerous, and their effect upon the whole is slight. The reader who would understand and appreciate Isaiah will of course go to the text itself,[1] not to a popular translation or free paraphrase. And perhaps if more of his spirit possessed the modern reader and student we should find it easier to enter into his thought.

It is the view of the great majority of thoughtful readers that the sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah, as they are presented in our English Bible, are not the work of one and the same author or

[1] The words are not intended primarily to urge the study of the Hebrew original, although this is the ideal method of appreciation, and in no other way can adequate or perfect understanding and sympathy be gained. The English Revised Version has been described as the best commentary on the Hebrew text, and it is also the rendering which has most nearly succeeded in the endeavour to reproduce the music and eloquence of the earlier version with closer fidelity to the original text.

composed at one definite period. That they are included in the Hebrew Canon under one name is not decisive, as has been already indicated, or of much weight against this view; in the transmission of the documents the inclusion or combination of two or more of them in one volume or book would not be unlikely. Parallels might be drawn with the book of Zechariah or of Proverbs; and others might easily be suggested. The most striking change both of style and subject-matter is at the beginning of chap. xl. The chapters that follow at least in greater part have been attributed to a prophet living and writing towards the close of the Jewish exile in Babylon, when a well-grounded confidence existed among the people of early restoration to their own land. And it is neither perverseness nor a desire to impair or overthrow the authority of Holy Scripture that has led scholars of all countries to this conclusion. The differences of style and vocabulary and manner of writing are indeed manifest even in a translation[1]; but these perhaps would not by themselves, if they stood alone, preclude the possibility that the whole was the work of one author, composing or dictating at a considerable interval of time. The decisive factor has always been found to be, not variation of diction or style, but the changed outlook and the diverse circumstances and needs to which the speaker or writer addressed himself. No

[1] It is fair to add that the differences of style, &c., are in the judgement of the writer more definitely marked in the original Hebrew. They are inevitably smoothed over in a rendering into another language by one and the same translator or company of translators. The possibility above admitted may not seem to present any very great difficulty from the point of view of the English or other version alone. It is much more remote in the light of the Hebrew text, and greater almost insuperable hindrances would be found to lie in the way of any such admission.

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more than a modern preacher would an ancient prophet waste his time and strength and speak into the air by discoursing on themes or denouncing evils which were irrelevant to his audience and did not concern their present daily life. It is not in the least a question of the ability of a prophet to do and act thus. He was commissioned however to his own generation, to reveal to them the divine will and judgements, and to bring them messages of guidance and comfort. His service would be fruitless and his message worthless if he wrote and spoke of a hypothetical future with which his hearers were not in touch and in which they took no interest. The prophet lived for his contemporaries and reasoned to them of righteousness and the love of God. When therefore in the later chapters a new situation has arisen, and it is not the subjects of a king reigning in Jerusalem or the king himself that are addressed but exiles turning eager eyes towards and hoping for a return to their own land—the prophet encourages their hopes and bids them anticipate redemption—it is not Isaiah the son of Amoz who speaks, but a prophet living in these later days, proclaiming to the men of his own time and nation the divine message of deliverance and of peace. The spiritual value of the book and the force of its marvellous eloquence and pathos are not diminished by recognition of the fact that more than one prophet makes his voice heard across the centuries. It is worth while to emphasize this here in the case of the book of Isaiah. For the same problem or conditions will meet us elsewhere. 'In divers portions and in divers manners' and by many lips God has spoken.

Further it is usual to distinguish not only a 'Second Isaiah,' whose work or composition begins with chap. xl., but a 'Third Isaiah' who takes up speech or pen at chap. lvi. and continues more or less uninterruptedly to the end of the book; so that there are three main divisions of which the first only is distinguished by the author's name, the others are anonymous, although not on that account of less authority, dignity, or weight. It is by many scholars judged probable that more writers than three have contributed to the book of Isaiah as it is known to-day to the Christian Church. This is not the place however for a discussion of details. The book has been fortunate for the most part in the scholarship and wise judgement of those who have commented upon it; and in these all that is needful or desired will readily be found.

In the prophetic book which bears the name of Jeremiah there is no well-marked cleavage into two or more divisions as in Isaiah, but the chronological order of the prophecies is not observed, and in part at least a reason for this is assigned in the destruction of the original roll on which they were inscribed, and their re-writing from memory on a second and enlarged roll, other oracles or utterances being added to the previous record. In the last chapter of the book also a brief historical narrative is recorded as subsequent to the 'words of Jeremiah.' Apparently also no part of the roll was written by the prophet's own hand. The various prophecies were dictated to the skilled, probably professional scribe Baruch, who was responsible for the actual text inscribed on the roll. The fifty-first chapter ends with a kind of colophon, 'thus

far are the words of Jeremiah,' and the narrative of the closing chapter of the book is parallel to, and for the most part identical with, 2 Kings xxiv. 18--xxv.

The view for a long time prevailed which ascribed to Jeremiah a weakness, almost effeminacy of character, of which there is no trace in his book, unless the natural shrinking from the heavy burden and office laid upon him be regarded as such.[1] The opinion has apparently arisen and maintained itself owing to the mistaken impression that Jeremiah the prophet was author of the book of Lamentations: 'the weeping prophet.' This last belief has no authority or basis in Jewish tradition, and seems to be due to a prologue or introduction prefixed to the Greek text of the book, which states that after the fall of the city Jeremiah sat weeping and uttered the following lament over Jerusalem. A study of the life and utterances of the prophet as recorded in his book is sufficient to refute the charge of weakness. The biography itself is far from being complete; it consists rather of detached vignettes than a detailed and consecutive history, but there is revealed everywhere a strong personality, fearless and self-reliant, with a sure knowledge of the will of God and of the duty and wisdom of obedience to it, an unflinching courage before kings or a hostile hierarchy, and a profound love for his people and a patriotism that shrank from no personal sacrifice to promote his country's good. Perhaps there is more of self-revelation in his book than in any other of the great prophetic compositions of the Old Testament. The revelation is not of

[1] Chap. i. 6: behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

weakness, but of strength. And the life of the prophet, as far as it can be reconstructed from his words, is of unsurpassed interest, a heroic struggle for the maintenance of right and truth against short-sighted folly and treachery, incurable selfishness and obstinate ill will.

If no other argument could be adduced against the old and obsolete theory of verbal inspiration, the book of Jeremiah would offer a decisive refutation in the contrast between the Hebrew and Greek texts. It is not known by whom or at what period the book was rendered from the Hebrew into Greek, but it is certain that more than one translator was engaged in the task, probably at least three or four, who differed in the principles which they applied to their work and as far as we can see in the accuracy and closeness with which they adhered to the text before them. The order also of the chapters in the Septuagint version varies from the Hebrew order, most notably in the case of the prophecies concerning the nations, which in the Hebrew text and in the English which follows it form chaps. xlvi. to li., but in the Greek are placed as a whole after chap. xxv. 13. Moreover the internal order of these oracles is changed. The Hebrew text recites in succession prophecies against Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Elam, and finally and at greatest length Babylon. The series in the Greek begins with Elam, which is followed by oracles against Egypt, Babylon, the Philistines (ἀλλόφυλοι), Idumaea (Edom), Ammon, Kedar, Damascus, and Moab. Other differences between the two texts are numerous, omissions of words and sentences, additions, and transpositions;

with the result that in the final issue the Greek text of the book of Jeremiah presents greater variations from the Hebrew original than are to be found in any other book of the Old Testament. What account is to be given of these variations? It is easy to uphold the authority of the extant Hebrew text, and to maintain that every departure from it is an error and must be disregarded. If however Jeremiah himself or even one of his immediate disciples determined or sanctioned the existing order in the Hebrew, what translator would have been venturesome enough to ignore or depart from it? With regard to the oracles against the nations the suggestion lies ready to hand that these might not improbably have been written at first on separate rolls or sheets of writing material, and in the process of combination for the purposes of the book have been joined together in a changed or variant order. But if this conjecture is to be upheld it would follow that a fixed and settled order had not been determined at the time when the Greek translation was made, and that as a whole these oracles had not yet found their place within the volume accredited to Jeremiah. This is not an impossible supposition, or one to be rejected off-hand. Moreover if the view which the book itself suggests is justified that Jeremiah did not write with his own hand, but dictated the various prophetic discourses to Baruch or another, or allowed them to be taken down from his lips; these also may have existed at first and been circulated in the same condition before they were combined together into a single roll. The process then will have been not unlike that of the traditional compilation of the Qurān after the death of Muhammad,

except that it took place in part at least during the lifetime of the prophet ; of which we read that the Arabic text was composed by his immediate disciples 'from date-leaves, and tablets of white stone, and from the breasts of men.'

Reference is made to these facts here not as suggesting doubt with regard to the reliability of the text as a whole or the general trustworthiness of the narrative or discourses contained therein. They illustrate however the difficulties and questions, perhaps as perplexing in Jeremiah as in any book of the Old Testament, that confront the thoughtful student of these ancient books. Incidentally it may be noted that similar difficulties did not arise in the instance of the Pentateuch. It would seem that greater care was exercised in its preservation, greater reverence paid at least originally to its exact text, than was considered necessary in the case of the books comprising the other two divisions of the Canon ; and that the tradition of its guarded and accurate rendering into Greek was well founded. Here in the case of Jeremiah's work are two ancient texts, Hebrew and Greek, divergent from one another in not a few details, of one of which the approximate date is known, within the lifetime of Jeremiah himself, or possibly and in part within a period not long after his death. The date and place of origin of the other may be inferred with some degree of probability from internal evidence, but the circumstances of the Greek translation cannot be determined beyond controversy and it is certainly centuries later than the Hebrew text. Is either of these texts to be regarded as an infallible standard, to which the other must be made to conform, and if

so which of them? It is easy and natural to claim the first place for the Hebrew text because of its superior antiquity, and also because with all the early faults and failings of its transmission it was more securely guarded on the whole than the Greek. In general and on the whole this is unquestionably right. Both texts however have been transmitted by the hands of writers and copyists, and until the invention of printing neither therefore was safe from the accidents of human error and oversight, from omissions, misplacements, additions made perhaps originally in the form of marginal comments which were later mistakenly incorporated in the text itself. If the Hebrew text as read in our Bibles could be regarded as the exact words recorded by Baruch, without alteration of jot or tittle, discussion would be at an end at least as far as priority is concerned. The chapters of the Hebrew however are not in chronological order. If this is original, a feature of the earliest inscribed roll, it does not seem to argue the minute care which we are accustomed rightly to associate with the later Jewish editors and scribes. In many instances also it is possible to retranslate the Greek text where it differs from the extant Hebrew into the form of Hebrew words which must have lain before the Greek translator as he carried on his work. This Hebrew text he at least believed to be the true text of the prophet, with the rendering of which into Greek he was entrusted. It will be said that he was mistaken. Whether this were so or not, the question is inevitably raised as to the source and history of this variant Hebrew. The author of the Greek version did not invent it. And moreover in not a few instances it

commends itself to our judgement, and appears to possess an intrinsic probability and superiority which render impossible its rejection on universal or *a priori* grounds. The confidence that would affirm unequivocally of either text that it is altogether free from error is unjustified. The sincere and careful reader will prove all things. And he will find that the great verities of the faith, righteousness, justice, and the love of God, stand fast and are unaffected by uncertainties of detail and inability in these matters to formulate a final judgement.

According to the narrative in chap. xxxvi the prophecies of Jeremiah were first committed to writing not by his own hand in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, *i.e.* 604 B.C., and were read aloud from the roll by Baruch in the house of the Lord before the assembled princes or members of the royal house. They resolved to communicate the words of prophecy to the king, and fearing their effect upon him advised that Jeremiah and Baruch should go into concealment and should not confide to any one the place where they were hidden. The dates given are precise, and it can easily be understood how deeply they would fix themselves in the memories at least of the prophet and his minister or amanuensis. ' In the fifth year in the ninth month ' the king heard read a few paragraphs from the roll, and in his folly and waywardness forthwith destroyed it, burning it in the fire, against the advice of some of his better counsellors, to whom he refused to listen. Undeterred by the king's opposition and evident displeasure Jeremiah obtained a second roll, and with the co-operation of Baruch secured the re-writing of his

prophecies with many additions; and formulated a fierce denunciation of Jehoiakim, foretelling his ruin and that of his house and people for their refusal to hearken to the divine warnings through the prophet.

Such very briefly is the history of the book from its own evidence. The final chapter, as it is found in our texts, is clearly independent of this plan, and so also it would appear probable are the prophecies against the non-Israelite peoples, chaps. xlvi.—li. By his note at the end of chap. li. the writer or compiler, whether Baruch or another, evidently intends to certify these as the utterances of Jeremiah (chap. xlvi. 1); but it is not likely that they formed part of the original roll or rolls. There remain chaps. i.—xlv., some parts of which at least cannot have been contained in the roll inscribed in the reign of Jehoiakim, for they deal with later events, as for instance chaps. xliii. and xliv. with events in Egypt. The reproduction of the contents of the original roll after its destruction is not an impossible feat of memory. It is however not unnatural to regard a considerable portion of the book as belonging to the later additions. These were certainly not all made at one time or by the same hand. To the same cause, perhaps, the loss of the first roll, is to be traced the disarrangement of the chronological order of the prophecies. To an Eastern writer it would not appear as obligatory or necessary as it would to us to observe the succession of time.

To the prophet therefore will not be refused the credit and fame of a great man, who lived through a great crisis in his people's history, and testified consistently although in vain against the short-sighted

and disastrous course which the leaders of the nation were pursuing. Although in a different station in life and without the personal influence and standing which Isaiah apparently possessed, Jeremiah was yet a true statesman as well as prophet, if to have continually at heart the interests of his country and unfailingly to discern and proclaim the right course to follow merit the name. It demanded no little courage to face the opposition of kings and princes, of rulers and priests and people, to denounce the popular sins and extravagances, and to show the ruin to which they surely led. We may perhaps read between the lines that there were some at least who saw the folly of the nation's ways and approved the protest of the prophet. For the most part however they were cowed by the violence of his adversaries, and did not venture openly to avow their sympathy or to take their stand by his side. It is easy at this distance of time to discern the rightness of Jeremiah's judgement not only in moral conduct but in his insistence on the principles by which the state should be guided. In the disorder and tangle of internal affairs in those years and under the ominous pressure of foreign powers it cannot have been so easy to see straight, and still less to maintain the right against almost universal condemnation. Judah at that period, it has been well said, was like an anvil between the two hammers, Babylon and Egypt. It was difficult in the clash and turmoil of selfish and divergent interests to discern which would fall first and with the more disastrous effect. Jeremiah saw clearly and proclaimed with unfaltering conviction on which side the national interest and safety lay. Those however in whose hands the power and control at

various times lay judged otherwise, and were able to compel Jeremiah to follow with them in the course they adopted. His urgent appeals failed to move rulers or people. By others apparently, amongst whom must be numbered the general of the victorious Babylonian army, his character and disinterested patriotism were recognised and honoured. He failed to save even the remnant of his people ; they fled to Egypt, and were absorbed or died out there. But no name or reputation stood higher than that of Jeremiah with the later Jews, and his fortitude, the purity of his motives, and the unselfishness of his life have won unstinted admiration from all who have read his words and studied the records of his career.

The third of the ' latter prophets ' wrote and taught under circumstances very different from those of his predecessors. There seems also to be justification for the belief that his discourses have been more fully and perhaps more accurately preserved, and that they received from the prophet's own hand something of the nature of editing and definite preparation for publication. A later contemporary of Jeremiah and like him a priest by descent, Ezekiel's prophetic work was accomplished in exile from his own land. ' By the river Khebar ' he lived as pastor and teacher of a company of his fellow countrymen, transported thither in one of the earlier deportations of the Jews from Jerusalem before the final destruction of the city, and with wistful saddened gaze followed the downward course of the sin-hardened and

selfish remnant who provoked the overthrow of their city at the hands of the king of Babylon. Many of his words indeed when he denounces vain luxury and the folly of deaf ears and obstinate heart, seem more appropriate to the Jews still resident in Judaea than to his fellow exiles. Possibly therefore they are to some extent earlier discourses delivered before his banishment, and incorporated at a later date in his book. The earliest specific note of time however is the 'fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity,' almost at the close of the sixth century before Christ; and his book is remarkable for the number and definite character of the dates that are given. The river Khĕbār, on or near to which the settlement of exiles to whom Ezekiel ministered was established, was not the well-known Khaboras, the east-bank tributary of the upper Euphrates, but apparently the Khabaris, an ancient stream or canal in or near Nippur, in southern Mesopotamia, now of course for many centuries dry. The site is still known by the name of Nuffer or Niffer, and excavations conducted there have revealed the traces of a long-continued and influential civilisation. The rulers of Nippur worshipped great gods and raised great temple-towers (*ziggurats*) in their honour many centuries before the Israelites entered Palestine. The exiled Jews therefore were inhabitants of no mean city, but one with an ancient and honourable history. Apparently in their exile the Jews were not concentrated in one place, in the capital or other city, but were distributed in groups in various towns and villages at the caprice of the king or the needs of the districts of the land. It would be of much interest to learn what relations the captive Jews maintained

with the citizens of Nippur, and what was the condition of the city in their day. On these subjects the book of Ezekiel vouchsafes no information, unless it may be assumed that the evil ways of idolatry and immorality which the prophet so sternly censures, in which his compatriots forsook the Lord and served other gods, were exemplified in the lives and actions of those amongst whom their lot was cast.

For more than twenty years Ezekiel reasoned with his fellow countrymen in exile of truth and righteousness and the judgement to come. And it was in the course of these years ' in the twelfth year of our captivity ' that the news was received of the fall of Jerusalem, and the fulfilment of his worst fears. The catastrophe does not seem to have made any difference in the attitude of the prophet towards the Jews by whom he was surrounded. The disaster had been anticipated, and as it were discounted. Nor is there any evidence that the Jews with Ezekiel took any heed or cared for the fate of the city. They apparently lived in comparative ease, and saw no reason to disturb themselves over the troubles of their compatriots in Palestine. It is fair to remember that we have no direct testimony from their own side as to the feelings with which they regarded Jerusalem and its citizens or the desolation of the city. Ezekiel's denunciations however of their idolatry and selfishness, of the rebellious spirit that possessed them and of their treachery towards Jehovah and defiance of his law and commandments, are as strong and constant as those of his great predecessors ; and there is no trace on their side of repentance or obedience to God's call or claims through the prophet. There is indeed

not a little resemblance between Ezekiel and Jeremiah in language as well as in thought; and it has been supposed that Ezekiel may have been acquainted with and influenced by the earlier preacher during the years preceding his exile. His age when he was exiled from Jerusalem is not recorded. It is evident however from his writings that he had served the priest's office in the Temple long enough to become familiar with the forms and ritual there practised. And thus spending if only a few years of mature life in the capital city he could hardly fail to receive impressions which to some extent moulded his character and directed his convictions and thoughts from the teaching and words of Jeremiah. A less definite acquaintance seems to be indicated with the writings of Isaiah. It would be natural that a thoughtful student of the divine purposes and dealings with his people should not leave unread the words and expositions of the men of God who had spoken to the people in His name. Ezekiel found himself in the line of Israelite prophets; and the manner and teaching of his predecessors, and their interpretations of the divine will, cannot have been indifferent to him.

Like his predecessors also, but to a considerably greater extent, Ezekiel conveyed the truth which he desired to impress upon the people by means of visions which he seems to have related to them, and symbolic actions performed in their midst, the significance of which was then definitely expounded and made clear. Apart from the general lesson of the inevitable punishment of apostasy and sin to which the fall and ruin of Jerusalem gave so terrible and

dramatic an emphasis, the teaching of Ezekiel is concentrated upon two themes, neither of which was strange to the prophets before him, but which he carried forward and developed with renewed earnestness and iteration. Of these the most prominent is the doctrine of the universal Providence of God, which in justice never forgets mercy, which vindicates the righteousness of His rule in providing and inflicting penalty for sin, but yet regards his people with unceasing love and will not let them utterly perish. This thought, present both to Isaiah and Jeremiah, is re-emphasized by Ezekiel, as though events had given it the lie, and faith in the divine oversight and love needed strenuously to be supported and maintained in the face of apparent failure to find justification. Ezekiel also seems to have a wider outlook, perhaps obtained by his sojourn in other lands and contact with foreign peoples; and the great doctrine of Deutero-Isaiah, reached probably in similar circumstances, of the divine purpose in and through Israel to save the world, has taken on a new significance and received a fresh and forward illustration. It has been said that Ezekiel's discourses show him lacking in evangelistic fervour and zeal. The criticism is less than just. It is true that neither the eloquence and majestic diction of Isaiah, nor the urgency and moving pathos of Jeremiah are at his command. A mere estimate of literary gifts and the power of forcible speech will assign to him a somewhat lower place than is theirs. The earnestness of his words however and his perseverance in the face of cold indifference and rebuff do not suggest failure of the evangelistic

spirit. A more uninspiring *entourage* than that of the prophet in exile by the river Khebar can hardly be imagined, if the picture which this book presents of unsympathetic audiences and a people absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure and gain tells the whole story. There is a deep love for his people and a steadfast faithfulness to his God which should give to Ezekiel a high place among those who have laboured and suffered for the truth's sake.

In a second respect the prophet's thought is more markedly in advance of the thought of those who have preceded him, and introduces and defines as it were the great doctrines and beliefs which were to be the foundation and support of later Judaistic faith. It was impossible for any thoughtful Jew with deep convictions, with loyalty to his nation and to his God, to live through the distressful years which reached their climax in the overthrow of David's dynasty and the destruction of his capital city without questioning the literal permanence of the throne of the great Israelite king and the possibility of its restoration in the holy city. More and more he would be drawn to a spiritual interpretation of faith and prophecy, and to an idealistic outlook which grasped the substance of the spirit and was willing to let go the shadow of the expectation of an earthly and visible kingdom. It was this thought, tentative as yet and not yet fully defined, to which Ezekiel gave expression. It almost fills the canvas of the later Jewish writers and exponents of Israel's hopes. To Ezekiel it meant also the appreciation of the value of the individual and of his personal responsibility for righteous or unrighteous conduct before God.

More and more his thought and teaching moved away from the conception of the nation as a whole, guilty or not guilty at Jehovah's judgement seat, to which so large a place had been given by earlier prophets and writers, and emphasized the need for the purity of personal character and motive, for duty and obligation to be realised by each for himself in the sight of God. Ezekiel was not the first to endeavour to bring home to the wrongdoer his personal responsibility for the sin which he committed. He gave scope and breadth however to a conception which henceforth was to change the emphasis as it were from the holy nation to the urgent requirements of personal holiness. And the doctrine and duty thus conceived and taught by the prophet became increasingly the prominent motive in Jewish writings and history, and found its most complete application and exposition in the life and words of Jesus Christ.

The symbolic teaching of Ezekiel is sometimes difficult to follow and to interpret, more so perhaps than that of Isaiah or Jeremiah; and likewise his visions. It must be remembered that they are the rich symbols and visions of an Eastern thinker and prophet, to which our colder and less imaginative Western nature does not naturally respond. It has been supposed for example that the vision of the first chapter of his book is the attempted description of a rare celestial phenomenon, perhaps only to be observed in Mesopotamia or a similar country of broad rivers and flat expanse of sand, seen and interpreted by a man to whom God was very near and nature the immediate channel through which he made himself known Some of Ezekiel's visions and symbolic

acts are among the most familiar of the Old Testament. Apparently he employed this method of preaching and teaching more generally than his predecessors. It is a method that appeals more insistently and forcibly in the Orient than to any of the nations of the West.

The relation also of the New Testament to this prophet is distinct from that which obtains towards the other prophetic writers of the Old Testament. Ezekiel is not expressly quoted by name by any New Testament writer, and it is often asserted that neither in the Gospels nor Epistles is there any evidence of his influence or of direct acquaintance with his book. In so far as this is true, the answer is perhaps that the New Testament teaching is in the direct stream of Ezekiel's evangel, and has made itself spiritual heir to all that he wrote and spoke. The book of the Revelation however is full of reminiscences of his words and prophecies, and its author can hardly have been ignorant of his writings as they are read to-day by the Christian Church. He is deeply imbued with the prophet's spirit, and more or less consciously often models the form and method of his teaching upon those of his great predecessor. The writers of the two books are sympathetic in spirit and in aim. If the name of Ezekiel is not in the New Testament his spirit lives there, as it has lived through all the generations of his countrymen, and inspires thought and aspiration among ourselves to-day.

The Twelve. The fourth book of the 'Latter Prophets' in the Jewish Canon is entirely unlike the

others. It is a volume of many parts, not even professedly the work of a single author, but nominally at least of twelve, of varying office and date. It is evident also that in this last of the four books the principle of chronological arrangement, which apparently governed the order of the first three, is abandoned, and 'The Twelve' were not placed last because they taught and wrote later than Ezekiel, as Ezekiel was later than Jeremiah, and both than Isaiah. The name may have been given to the collection because at whatever time or place the fragmentary remains of prophetic utterance were gathered together there were found to be no more and no less than twelve treatises or writings attributed to twelve authors. More probably the collection or book of the twelve assumed gradually the form in which it has been preserved, the number twelve being more or less arbitrarily fixed, and later composed or newly found portions, especially if anonymous as so large a proportion of ancient literature has proved to be, being attached to a prominent name or inserted where they appeared to be most in harmony with the meaning and thought of the author; and thus the definite number was maintained without accretion or the need of change. It would be quite in harmony with ancient practice and with ideas more characteristic perhaps of the East than the West, but neither fanciful nor uninfluential, to attach importance in a religious and mystical spirit to a fixed number, preferring to make internal additions rather than to multiply independent treatises or parts. The real history of the formation of this collection of prophetic writings is unknown, and the date at which it was

completed altogether uncertain. Nor is the question of vital importance. The spiritual significance of prophetic teaching is to a large extent independent of time and place ; although for its full appreciation and influence the words and thought of the prophet need to be interpreted in and through his environment. From the point of view of literature as well as of religious worth the ' Minor Prophets ' are invaluable fragments saved from the wreck of a national culture and life. Our modern term ' minor ' is unfortunate, suggesting inferiority, and is perhaps a contributory reason for the neglect into which these books have fallen. Other ' minor ' prophets besides ' The Twelve ' wrote and spoke in Israel ; but their words and works have perished. It is more than probable also that in the course of their ministry these preachers, whose words we know, wrote and spoke much that has not been preserved.

Of the origin and history therefore of this canonical book there is little that can be asserted, and not much in which conjecture is justified. It has been supposed that the order of the several parts is due to the gradual upbuilding of the whole, each part or author finding a place after his predecessors, until with Malachi the work was complete. Two other principles however at least would appear to have been contributory and recognised : chronology, or the succession in time of the prophets, was certainly taken into account in determining the order of the books, so that the writings of the earliest pre-exilic prophets stood first, and the series was closed with those of exilic and post-exilic date. Regard was also had to the comparative length of the contribution of each author. Hosea was placed

at the head, not only on account of his early date, but because his written work was of greater extent than the others and seemed therefore to deserve the more prominent position. Neither principle however it is evident was invariably observed, and probably there were other reasons and circumstances unknown to us which influenced the Jewish scholars who determined the order of their canonical books. They did not act by caprice or without consideration. A somewhat similar question arises in relation to the New Testament. It does not seem possible to define precisely by whom or on what principle the Epistles of St. Paul were arranged in their familiar order. But that this too was not accidental is evident.

The same process of reasoning moreover, and similar literary and circumstantial tests which have led scholars to believe that to the genuine writings of Isaiah for instance, or Jeremiah, additions have been made, and the sayings or compositions of other men have been incorporated, accidentally or otherwise, in the books that bear their name, if or when applied to the book of 'The Twelve' would indicate differences of authorship and date within the several parts. It is neither necessary nor reasonable to accept the views of a few extremists who pull to pieces ancient documents with the ease and irresponsible freedom of critics at the desk. But the documents themselves cannot be studied attentively without changes of condition and outlook becoming manifest, as well of diction as of style, which seem to point to a new hand and mind behind the written word. Especially is this the case with the book of Zechariah, as will later find explanation and illustration. The Oriental mode of

regarding written composition was, it may be worth while to reassert, different from that of modern times. There was no copyright law or custom, no vested interest or right in a document published to the world. Additions or omissions might be freely made under cover of the original name. There was no deception where the practice was acknowledged, and no claim to proprietary rights of authorship. Hence, as has often been noted, the fact that so much of ancient Hebrew literature is anonymous becomes readily explicable. What was written was written for the instruction and benefit of others, not for the glorification of the author. Only in later times apparently did the desire arise to attach these floating literary fragments to a well-known name, and to find for them a literary sponsor to whom to attribute their origin. If in the process mistakes were sometimes made, this can hardly be a matter of surprise. That anonymous writings, of more or less extent, should in this manner have been included among the compositions known as the Minor Prophets, and have merged their identity under one or other of the twelve names, is to be expected. The argument or demonstration is reinforced by the anonymous character of the last book of the collection, Malachi, not a proper name, but at the most a pseudonym or title, ' my messenger.'

The other extreme perhaps is represented by the book of Hosea, which is hardly a definite treatise or consecutive exposition at all, but as it has been described for the most part a series of disconnected texts or brief notes for public discourse or teaching. It seems hardly possible that one and the same author can have designed its preservation in the form in

which it is read to-day. The abruptness and discordance are veiled in the English version, in an admirable and most skilful rendering. It is however one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult of the books of the Old Testament, both as regards problems of translation and exposition.

It is generally accepted that the prophet Amos was the earliest of the Twelve, 'in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash king of Israel,' that is in the second quarter of the eighth century B.C. 'two years before the earthquake.' If it were possible to know the date and detail of the earthquake to which reference is made, the time of Amos' ministry or call would be determined with precision. It had evidently been a day of desolation and sorrow, which had burnt itself into the memories of men, by which they dated the events of their own time. It is not likely that it has any relation to the upheaval and catastrophe, the shaking of the Mount of Olives, which is to accompany the descent of Jehovah thereon, as it is described in prophetic imagery in the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah (verse 4). A further indication of time is found in chap. vii. 10 ff., where Amaziah priest of Bethel, in fear for his place and prerogative, invokes the aid of king Jeroboam to expel or destroy the prophet; and the destruction which he plans for Amos recoils with force upon himself and his house. It is an episode of intense realism, a detail of history dramatically inserted between prophetic visions, portending similar ruin and overthrow for the nation at large and its cherished sanctuaries. Amos was therefore an

earlier contemporary of Hosea, to whom the word of the Lord is recorded to have come in the reign of the same kings, save that to Uzziah king of Judah are added the names of his three successors, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, perhaps implying that the greater part of his ministry was exercised under these last. The two men may well have been acquainted with one another or with their several writings, though their spheres of service lay apparently for the most part apart. There is however no trace in either book of knowledge of or dependence upon the other. They went their independent ways and bore their independent witness in the name of Jehovah against the blind obstinacy and wrongdoing of their contemporaries.

The book of the prophecies of Amos is a worthy prelude or introduction to the volume of his successors. Dark, menacing, forbidding, except for the few closing verses, it is hardly redeemed by a single ray of light, a book of stern severe eloquence, enriched by passages of great descriptive power, the composition of a man of rich literary gifts, with the command of words and the ability to express himself with energy and pathos. According to his own account given in controversy with Amaziah, his was a new type of prophet and prophecy, and the rugged unconventional character of his book seems to attest the justness of the description. Neither the schools of the prophets nor the prophetic genealogies had known him, to mould him into stereotyped form or to give hereditary cast to his thoughts and teaching. A wealthy landowner or farmer, as he would now be called, at the divine bidding he had left all to become a simple preacher, to

live a hard and lonely life, not without danger, denouncing the sins of the people and upholding the ways and character of God. The neighbourhood of Tekoa, the little desolate village near Jerusalem, if indeed this is the place that is meant, has greatly changed since the days of Amos, when it must have been pleasant and rich, fertile and carrying great flocks. Like so much of Palestine it has been deforested and the land washed bare of the soil that enriched it and its possessors. It would not be very far-fetched to see therein a parable, a parallel to the fate which overtook the nation to whom Amos preached in vain.

The doctrine and teaching of Amos have without doubt as their foundation and basis the writings and traditions of his predecessors in the prophetic office, reinforced by a strong imagination and nourished by dreams and mystic visions natural to a true son of the soil. In the introductory chapters eight cities or nations are condemned for their crimes and greed, the most lengthy and severe denunciation being reserved for Israel, whose special privileges and deliverances enhance by contrast their wilfulness and sin. There is no justification for regarding the brief paragraph on Judah as a later insertion on the ground that Amos' ministry was addressed mainly, if not entirely to the house of Israel. The series would have been incomplete without Judah; and the same argument would eliminate the oracles against Moab and the rest. Amos' protest and teaching are founded throughout as it were upon a series of contrasts. The people of Israel have turned away from the Lord and have worshipped other gods. To them Jehovah has been but one god amongst many, and they have made

plain their faithlessness to him not by word only but by cruel and shameful deeds. Amos knows that the Lord is one, supreme and alone. He is a stern and consistent monotheist in days when the truth concerning Jehovah's character and claims had apparently been forgotten in an easy polytheism, which had adopted into its pantheon all the deities of the surrounding peoples and done great dishonour to Israel's God. In uncompromising terms he denounces the cruelty and greed and sin of which all classes in the community have been guilty, and calls upon them to set their house in order by a sincere repentance and reformation, which is the only way to avert the punishment which their sinfulness and estrangement deserve, and will otherwise inevitably receive. This is the one and only way of escape. The people on the contrary urge that the divine covenant with them was and is for their preservation under all circumstances, that the love of God for His people and resolve to secure their perpetual well-being and safety remain inviolate and are not dependent on the nation's ways or transgression. Amos replies that the covenant is mutual, that it demands and involves service and obedience on their side no less than loving-kindness and protection on the side of God, and that they cannot therefore expect or claim that God should fulfil on his part the terms of the covenant, when they have repudiated their own obligation and duty. That Israel was beloved of the Lord beyond all nations and attached to him by so strong ties only accentuates the wrong they have done, the sin and disobedience of which they have been guilty ; and the Day of the Lord, to which they look forward as a day of restitution and deliverance, when

all Israel's oppressors will be overthrown and the nation's proud independence made for ever secure, will on the contrary be a day of visitation and judgement, of confusion for the evildoer and righteous punishment for his sin. Amos' outlook is grave and dignified, his words vehement and eloquent, but he sees no hope save and unless the people truly repent and forsake their sin.

And indeed until the final verses of this book of prophecy the picture seems to be unrelieved by any gleam of hope or word of confident cheer. Amos is no pessimist, but he can apparently find no ground for expectation that the people will listen to his counsel and reform their ways ; and if so the end is certain in irretrievable ruin. In the last paragraph of the book a new picture is drawn, abrupt and in strong contrast with all that has preceded, of future restoration and an ideal and happy state that is to be. On this account many scholars and students of Amos' prophecies have supposed the paragraph to be a later additon to the prophet's work, an oracle preserved without name of author or recorded place of origin, which has become attached at the end of the book of Amos. The picture is drawn in terms of the restoration of the land to an ideal fertility and prosperity, in which Amos would have rejoiced. The style however is different from that of the preceding chapters, and much more the outlook and implied circumstances of time and place. It would seem to be probable therefore that the conclusion above indicated is justified and should be accepted. Certainty however in the nature of the case is not attainable. Verses from the paragraph are quoted in the New Testament by James at the Jerusalem

Council without name of author; they are 'words of the prophets.' It is characteristic moreover of the freedom with which all such references were made that reminiscences at least both of Isaiah and Jeremiah are included within the same quotation. The ancient writers did not usually, and indeed in many instances could not for lack of books 'verify their references.' They relied upon memory, trained and faithful to a much greater extent than in modern times. Precise verbal accuracy moreover in the modern sense of the term was neither expected nor maintained.

The younger contemporary of Amos, if indeed he were younger, who shared with him as far as the extant books of the Hebrew Canon give testimony the honour of being the earliest to leave a written book of prophecy for the benefit and instruction of posterity, was Hosea, who lived and taught in the second half of the eighth century before Christ, 'in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel.' It is not to be supposed that these introductory phrases with their chronological details were prefixed to their prophecies by the prophets themselves. They are like the epitomes or preludes to the Psalms, and like these are included in the authorised Hebrew text. They represent tradition, which there is no reason to regard as other than in general reliable and faithful, concerning the date and status of the prophet, the speaker or author of the discourses that follow. It is generally supposed that Hosea was a native of the kingdom of Israel, unlike Amos who derived from the southern land of Judaea, on the ground of his manifest familiarity

with names and places in the northern part of Palestine, Shechem, Gilead, and others. The inference as to his origin in the north is of course not inevitable, for his knowledge may have been gained in later life. There is nothing in the diction or language of his book, as far as we are able to judge of these things, to suggest a northern source or a different perhaps more mingled culture than that of the south. His testimony was delivered to the citizens of Jeroboam's kingdom at a time when its prosperity and power seemed to have reached their climax, and few probably if any anticipated its rapid decline. The language of his book is very difficult. In parts it is terse to obscurity; the sentences are broken and involved, often appearing to defy construing or interpretation; the thought, instead of running steadily in a single stream, eddies here and there, returns upon itself, breaks off and resumes disconnectedly beyond even the wont or licence of an Oriental writer. The classical author with whom Hosea has been compared is Tacitus, but the sonorous phrases and majestic march of the latter's narrative are foreign to the simplicity of a Hebrew prophet. Hosea's book of prophecy also has suffered more than most from his transmitters, from the accidents of time, and from confusion and loss; until, as has often been said, his prophecies are rather texts for illuminating discourse than the actual discourses themselves. This does not apply to the whole book. There are parts where the progress seems clear and the thought lucid. The language and sentences however soon plunge again into obscurity. This does not detract from the value of the book, but it renders difficult the task

of the interpreter, and demands from the student who would dig forth the gold much patience and sympathy and insight.

A contrast has often been drawn between the two prophets, not always to the advantage of Hosea. If Amos represented the justice of God, and drew the picture of the inevitable consequences of their sin to ungodly Israel, Hosea conceived no less deeply and set forth no less realistically the divine love. The rough strong man like Amos is often lovable to those who know him. And Hosea, the sad experiences of whose private life had given him an entrance into the secret chambers of the divine tenderness and compassion, where perhaps the older prophet could not have followed, was not therefore a weakling, without manly power or independence. The nature of Hosea indeed, as far as we can justly estimate it in the broken and unsatisfying condition of his book, was strongly emotional, but he was not at the mercy of his feelings. If he spoke in less stern and powerful language than Amos, he yet did not waver or compromise in his denunciation of the people's sin, and was no less open-eyed to the consequence of their rebellion against God and neglect of His commandments apart from a true reformation of heart and life. It would seem indeed that these consequences of calamity and ruin to land and people were more patent in their swift oncoming in the later years at least of Hosea's ministry. The reign of Jeroboam was an age of much worldly prosperity, of wealth and luxury drawn from many sources. But the cancer of selfishness and greed, of forgetfulness of God and oppression of man, had spread widely beneath the surface and infected all

classes. There was apparently no outward or external evidence of the corruption in the days of Amos. The national prosperity was unbroken, and a long era of comfortable wealth and indulgence seemed to be assured. The mutterings of the storm were audible only to a prophet's ear. It was so also in the earlier years of Hosea ; but later he saw the plague not only rapidly spreading but appearing on the surface, and threatening impending ruin to which none could be blind ; and his sympathetic nature, and the sufferings through which he had himself passed, put him into closer touch as it were with the wrongs and unmerited oppression and sufferings of his fellow countrymen. Both prophets set forth essentially the same doctrine of God and of His relation to Israel. Jehovah is supreme in rights and power, and His claims are inalienable. And both discern the hopelessness of Israel's position and the certainty of the national fate, if there is persistence in sin and no real repentance. Hosea is not less strong than Amos, and faithful to his prophetic call. It is however a different kind of strength. The latter sees and emphasizes the demands of the moral justice of God. The former is assured by his own consciousness and experience that God is also love, not only the judge but the father of his people. In some way, which perhaps in the imminent calamities and downfall of Israel he would not have found it easy to define or describe, love is and will be triumphant. Therefore it is that the note of hope is more prominent in his writings. If the last words of the book of Amos are from the prophet's own pen this note is present there, as a kind of post-script. In the prophecies of Hosea it is the constant

foil to the darker theme of Israel's provocation and guilt. Impartial justice offers no ground of hope, where guilt is brazen-faced and unashamed. Hosea's hope of a restoration, of good after evil, rest after distress and storm, is founded upon his conviction of the real character of his God. If he, a man, can maintain his love though violated and flouted, Jehovah will not cease to love His own people, and they chastised and purified may look forward to a renewed life of security and peace in the loving-kindness of their God.

It would not be worth while and space would not allow to follow in like detail the life-history and doctrine of the remaining prophetic writers of this book of 'The Twelve'; or to endeavour to assign to each his precise place in the development and succession of the world's great teachers. Each of them has conceived and delivered his own message; and it may well be that some of them would hardly take rank with the greatest thinkers of mankind. To the men of their own time and generation they had a word of vital import for exhortation or consolation or warning. Their doctrine was the doctrine of their own day, reinforced and interpreted by their clearer insight into the divine character and will and by fuller sympathy with the divine purposes and ways. Nor is it only the religious life of the Jewish nation that would have been the poorer for their loss or exclusion from the Canon of Scripture. No link in the chain of human aspiration and searchings after the truth can be forfeited or destroyed without impoverishing the whole. Each and all of these writers claim and merit greater attention than they generally

receive. Difficulties of order and date also lie in the way of an entirely satisfactory presentment of the development of doctrine; and probably those responsible for the arrangement of the several books were themselves unable to determine exactly the chronological order of the Twelve. Later judgement also has veered and changed considerably; for example, the book of Joel, which formerly and almost universally was considered to be among the earliest is now usually assigned a position near the close of the series. If the conclusion arrived at above is justified that not infrequently earlier and later material was incorporated into one book, and that the prophets themselves do not hesitate to adopt and to make use of the words or writings of their predecessors, it will in some instances at least be impossible to establish an absolute date which will cover the existing contents of a completed book. It may sometimes be practicable only to state a round figure and to determine an approximate chronological order. The question is extraordinarily complicated and of great interest. The life of the prophet is not necessarily conterminous in regard to date with the book that passes under his name. It may surely be said however that the claim of those readers and critics, who at this distance of time and with so different an outlook and prepossessions affix a date with precision to each paragraph or verse in a prophetic work, is entirely without foundation. Except in general terms the task cannot be accomplished for want of evidence and the necessary equipment of knowledge of the conditions of the prophet's time. It is probable that additions were

made until a comparatively late period, and the Canon of the Prophets was not finally closed until a date some years perhaps centuries subsequent to that which has often been assumed.

It will perhaps not be unfitting to select for brief further examination one of the best-known in part at least of the Minor Prophets and to endeavour to estimate the contribution therein made to the history and development of religious thought. Neither the date nor the author of the book of Jonah can be determined. If regard were had to the style and diction of the work alone, it would be placed late in the series of prophetic writers. This conclusion is probably correct. It is not difficult however to understand the reason why, although so diverse in character from the rest, a place has been assigned to the book among the Prophets of the Canon. For the 'hero' of the story, an episode of whose life-history is here narrated, was most strikingly and convincingly a preacher. Not at all a prophet, in the later narrower meaning of the term, but a great evangelist, the first Jewish missionary to the Gentiles, initiating as far as our knowledge goes a wide and lasting crusade to make known the God of the Jews to the outside peoples, which culminated, when the Jewish heart had again closed in and hardened itself, in the new evangel of the Apostle of the Gentiles. The prefatory words of the book are not intended to indicate or suggest that Jonah the son of Amittai was its author. If they were, they would provide at least a *terminus ante quem* it cannot have been composed. Reference is made to this Jonah in the brief narrative of the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Kings xiv. 25), where the king is said to have

fulfilled a prophecy by him. It is implied that Jonah lived and prophesied at an earlier date, but this is not stated in the narrative in so many words. The argument however is convincing which denies that the authorship of the extant book can be attributed to so early a period. On the evidence of the book itself it is of much later origin. And the writer of the book uses the name of the older prophet, not as a *nom de plume* to conceal his own identity, for he is indifferent to this, but because within the store of noteworthy traditions which have been handed down to his own day there is one which tells the story of Jonah's mission to Nineveh, which seems to him most worthy of reproduction and circulation. If a conjecture may be hazarded, the writer lived not far from the age of Malachi, the equally unknown author of the last recorded canonical work of prophecy.

It is moreover passing strange that the narrative or story of the book of Jonah should ever have been regarded as literally true, or intended to set forth events as they actually occurred in the experience of one man. It is a story or parable like the parable of the trees of the forest electing a ruler (Judges ix. 7 ff.). This does not of course imply that it is altogether fanciful, with no foundation in fact. The writer did not mean to assert that these things happened literally and in detail as he here sets them down. His interest is in the underlying truth, the lesson as we should call it. Probably the story has its basis in a real experience of a prophet or the prophet Jonah, the essential part of which tradition has faithfully preserved and has added details and marvels such as tradition and folk-lore love to invent and display.

What part the writer himself took in this enlargement or embroidery it is not possible to determine. At this distance of time, and with no evidence to hand, it is wholly impracticable to separate out the real experience and unfailingly to discard additions. A prophet received a divine call, was reluctant to obey, and fled in order to evade an unwelcome duty. On the voyage to a distant land he suffered shipwreck, was saved from imminent death, and finally brought to acquiesce in the divine command. Incidentally it may be noted that the writer of the book is familiar with the prejudices of seafaring men, and knows something of the caprices and monstrous forms of the ocean. The prophet faced his duty, and with immediate and marvellous success delivered his message to the entire population of a great far-off city. But further, to the prophet's eyes jaundiced by sickness perhaps a sunstroke, the success itself, so complete and overwhelming, seemed a belittlement or weakening of divine purpose, a contradiction of the divine certainty of judgement. The writer's concern is with the moral, the lesson involved ; and as soon as that is ready the veil of parable and story is dropped. He would have been astonished to learn that posterity so constantly missed and even misrepresented his meaning, diverted by the drapery of the story and the marvels of a great fish.

The recorder or reproducer of the history of the strange experiences of Jonah had it in mind to teach by way of a parable three great lessons of pre-eminent although perhaps not of equal importance to the men of his own day and to their successors. He leaves the history to tell its own tale, but puts into

concise expression in his closing words its greatest and most impressive truth. God is compassionate and merciful beyond all human conception of pity, and gives to His compassion the final and determining part in His dealings with men. Jonah had himself to learn this by a somewhat bitter experience, humiliating apparently to his pride and accentuated by depressing sickness and pain. The same divine attribute had indeed been insistently proclaimed by earlier Jewish prophets and writers. But they had taught and declared it in its relation to the chosen people and their covenant God. It was not that they denied or would have denied that the compassion of the Lord was operative towards other men. Their outlook however did not extend in this respect to them. The Sovereign of the whole earth governed and governed righteously, but they did not stay to analyse the principles of his rule, or to think of his just sway as tempered by mercy. Jonah was the first, as far as we know, to assert and teach that the infinite compassion of God was not only for Jews, but for ignorant Gentiles, and even for the dumb cattle, the beasts of the field. It was a great truth, a commonplace in later times and to a broader more clear-sighted doctrine of God. The missionary prophet, unwilling herald as he is represented of God's controlling love, has been the forerunner of many others, even among the Jews themselves, who have realised and proclaimed the limitless divine mercy to the sons of men.

The second truth was that the judgements of God involving penalty and destruction are conditional. 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.' In some way or other it came to the knowledge of

Jonah that Nineveh would not be overthrown ; that the sincere and universal repentance of king and people alike would avail to avert the threatened punishment. The prophet was angry, angry that his preaching had apparently been falsified, the penalty remitted, and that the sentence which he had announced in the name of the Lord was not to be executed. Jonah already understood, as of course every Jew knew, that the Lord was gracious and full of compassion, but he did not realise that his mercy was thus far extended. Even prophets, like ordinary men, sometimes misunderstand the divine purposes of love, and limit or depreciate the rule of his loving-kindness and readiness to forgive.

Again, but of less importance than the two great truths already set forth, Jonah is to learn in his own experience how trivial, narrow and selfish, is his human compassion contrasted with the divine. ' Thou hast had pity on the gourd ' ; it had sheltered the prophet's head, and had given him respite for an hour or two from bodily distress and pain. ' Should not I have pity on Nineveh that great city.' The prophet had learned and seen its greatness as he had travelled through it ; but the ignorance and need of its people had apparently made no effectual appeal to him. Absorbed in himself he is shown the littleness of his temper and the unworthiness of his selfish pity for the gourd. It was not even for the gourd's sake but for Jonah's sake that he was sorry for it. The general conception and understanding of the divine love has advanced far since the prophet's day, as it has been interpreted in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it has never been more far-reaching

and penetrative than in our own time and in our own land. Even so, it would hardly have availed to cover the whole of great Nineveh, its people and its cattle; or to realise that the noblest and most effectual compassion has its *raison d'être* in the repentance of the compassionated.

The last of the long series of prophets, not the last perhaps in chronological succession, of whom it would be of interest and profitable to take note, was markedly different from Jonah. Possibly in date they were not very much apart, but in character and in the tasks to which they devoted themselves, they were far asunder. Zechariah was in the direct line of the national prophets from which the author of the book of Jonah had broken free. And although he shared the changed outlook both of prophets and people which the years of the exile brought with them, the new orientation of national hopes and desires, it was apparently in a more conservative spirit, more hopeful that the past might be linked on to the present and both to a brighter future for the nation and Jerusalem, than that of those who had already begun to realise that Israel's true kingdom was of the spirit and not on the desecrated and desolated soil of Palestine. The experiences of the exile could not but have their influence on Jewish character and national life. Zechariah, like the other prophets of his time, reflects those influences, and in some measure gives expression to them. To have come into contact with highly civilised peoples of different antecedents, traditions, and habits of life; to have been witnesses of a highly wrought culture with other prepossessions and founded upon distinct if in part kindred faiths; to have seen the march of great

armies, the pomp of great courts, and the magnificence of strange rituals; these things cannot have left the exiles of Israel unaffected. It was true no doubt that in Palestine itself the Jews had been at various times in touch with a civilisation and culture older and in many respects superior to their own, with the Amorites, the Syrians, and the Philistines; the last of whom, because their deeds and reputation have been recorded by their foes, have perpetuated their name as an undeserved byword of contempt. The contact however was mainly by way of the clash of arms; and except as appropriating foreign beliefs and eagerly adopting foreign religious rites in defiance of their prophets and their law, there was little general appreciation, as far as we know, on the part of Israel of the culture of other peoples or disposition to recognise and adopt alien customs or ways that were good. The aloofness of the Jewish spirit is manifest through all their history, and not least in their exile. And therefore it has often been said not unjustly that the greatest gain which the Jews won from the experiences of the exile was negative, the abandonment of the inveterate tendency to idolatry, which had darkened their religious history through all the years of the Monarchy and had vexed the souls of their prophets. The statement may be accepted in a broad and general sense; although it could not be expected that so universal and deep-rooted a tendency should be wholly and at once eradicated. It is not a little curious however, that as far as we are able to trace the effects of life in foreign lands upon the Jewish habit of mind and thought, these appear to have been so inconsiderable. The explanation would seem to be, not that the

Jews were unimpressionable, but that the groups of exiles and colonists maintained to a large extent a separate life, and under the inspiration of their leaders and prophets in Babylon at least adhered to the hope of a speedy return to their own land. So the little band by the river Khebar, to whom Ezekiel ministered, had apparently little intercourse with the citizens of the town in which they lived. And a not unlike spirit of aloofness may perhaps be recognised in the Jewish colony at Elephantine on the Nile. As exiles the Jews were still a people apart, and seem in general to have held fast to a separate national life, whose hopes and fears other peoples neither could nor wished to share. The time for the breaking down of the barriers was not yet come.

Zechariah however and other Jewish writers and prophets who lived in close proximity to the Babylonian court and in contact with the active life of the capital cannot have remained altogether uninfluenced by their environment. In the case of Zechariah, as with some at least of his contemporaries and co-workers, the traces of such influence are few and unimportant. It would seem as though the very intensity of their patriotic feeling and the absorbing interest of their nation's fate, rendered them to a large extent blind to the virtues although not to the vices of other peoples, however great and prosperous they might appear to be. His thoughts and the thoughts of other leaders of the Jews turned inwards; and the immediate task of directing the people's steps into new ways, and of guiding and guarding their future course, was so great and absorbing that except for regal decrees and the actions of governors that

promoted or menaced their external fortunes the prophets of the Exile had little insight into the significance even of the religious beliefs of their captors, and little regard or care for the manner of their life. Israel filled the foreground and the centre and indeed the whole picture. It could hardly have been otherwise. And if Israel's past had been so disastrous a failure, might not the future, still under the guidance and government of Israel's God, be redeemed to righteousness, prosperity, and independence in their own land? The promises of good, which Jehovah had given to them and to their fathers, were not invalidated or cancelled by national folly and disobedience, but were suspended, their fulfilment deferred, and in the thoughts and hopes of the leaders of the nation the set time to favour Zion had surely come. To Zechariah therefore and to those like-minded with him freedom and happiness lay certainly in the future, if only the people could be persuaded or drawn to a real moral reformation, to obey the commandments of their God and to walk in His ways. This to the prophets of the Exile no less than to Amos and Hosea was the necessary condition of the divine favour and the only means by which they might hope to receive the divine blessing. The immediate task however that lay before them was to secure the return of the Jewish people to their own land, and the rebuilding of the national temple at Jerusalem, that the interrupted service of Jehovah might be resumed and the national life restored. This duty was so difficult and engrossing that it seemed at times to absorb all available energy and thought, and even to overshadow the vision of the

future, great and far-reaching as were the promises of good which it held forth. In later days, when disappointment had again settled down upon Israel's high hopes, it was this vision of the future that lightened the present with its darkened experiences, and made bright the ever receding horizon of the national anticipation and faith. For the time being the claims of the present with its paramount need for repentance and moral renewal were urgent.

The extant prophecies of Zechariah are contained within narrow limits of time. The earliest date given is the eighth month of the second year of Darius (*i.e.* 520 B.C.); the last is at the beginning of the seventh chapter of his book, the ninth month of the fourth year of the same king. The dates are given with so much regularity and precision that they are evidently intended to cover the entire period of his prophetic activity. This therefore extended to little more than two years. There is no reason to suppose that his ministry of preaching and exhortation was thus limited. As priest and prophet his contribution to the national life would naturally be larger than the utterances which have been preserved would suggest. Tradition relates that he lived to a great age. His style is characterised by many as dull and prosaic; and it is true that it does not conform to the laws and rhythm of Hebrew poetry as closely as that of most at least of his predecessors. His position as exhorter, reprover, in the midst of a discouraged unwilling people was not favourable to the cultivation of the poetic spirit. The proof however that this spirit was not dead in the heart of the Jewish

people may be found in the psalms. And Zechariah himself, in the epitomes prefixed to the Greek and other renderings of the Hebrew psalms, is credited with the authorship or joint-authorship of some of them.[1] His name and fame therefore were associated with poetry no less than with prose. There are reminiscences also of the words and phraseology of earlier prophetic writers which show that he was acquainted with their work and maintained and carried forward the true prophetic succession.

Of the first eight chapters of the book that passes under the name of Zechariah, which alone of the fourteen are generally recognised as due to the prophet himself, the larger part is occupied with the relation and interpretation of eight prophetic visions. These are followed by a series of exhortations and moral prescriptions, and by a brief but significant passage on the real inward intention of fasting. Even with the help of the explanations given the visions are not altogether easy to understand. Like the visions of earlier prophets, for instance of Amos or Ezekiel, they are enriched with Oriental imagery, with details and figures little appreciated by a later age. The most considerable and best-known vision is that in which the prophet greets Zerubbabel as Prince and Deliverer of the people, restorer of the Temple of the Lord, before whom all obstacles shall be subdued, and the great work carried to a successful and acclaimed conclusion. It is evident that the prophet like his contemporary Haggai regarded him as the chosen

[1] *e.g.* Pss. cxxxvii., cxxxviii. (A *al.*), cxlv.–cxlviii. in the Greek version; Pss. cxxv., cxxvi., cxlv.–cxlviii. in the Syriac.

leader and deliverer of the Jewish nation, called and endowed by the Lord of hosts, who together with Joshua the high-priest should inspire and direct the people, recalling them to a higher and better life. In his thoughts, thus expressed in visionary form, the present and the immediate future occupied the foremost place and were in need of inspired interpretation. Zechariah was no 'apocalyptist,' either in the broader or narrower meaning of the term in later times. His teaching was practical, and designed to meet the immediate needs of his age and nation. Whether poetry or prose however some of his words and phrases are as familiar and as often quoted as any in the Old Testament.

It must not therefore be supposed that Zechariah was a mere visionary, a dreamer of dreams, a mystic with no foothold upon earth. His teaching was direct and practical, stressing the duties of obedience to God and simple piety. How far the visions, and especially the part taken in their fulfilment by Zerubbabel as Prince and leader of the restored exiles, were literally rendered in fact and experience is unknown. Except for a late Jewish tradition of his death at Babylon, neither the name nor subsequent fate of Zerubbabel find mention in extra-biblical history. It may be that the name is assumed or invented, a veil to conceal the real identity, like Sheshakh in Jeremiah. He disappears from the scene, and the successes and triumphs which the prophet associates with him never came to fruition.

Of the further chapters of the book that bears the

name of Zechariah little need be written. It is generally conceded, on the ground of the outlook and apparent environment of the author or authors, that like the second part of Isaiah they are not from the hand of the prophet, and do not in fact originate from the same period. Into the details of the arguments by which this view is supported it is not necessary here to enter. From the beginning of chap. ix. there are no visions recorded and the diction and style are markedly different from those of the earlier chapters of the book. The writers also appear to have much less interest in moral and practical teaching, at least they do not emphasize it as Zechariah did, nor does their thought concentrate itself upon these subjects. Divergencies moreover exist within the chapters themselves, which make it probable that they consist broadly of two parts, the earlier of which comprising the three chaps. ix.–xi., with a few verses of chap. xiii., would seem to be the work of a prophet who lived under the kings of Israel, according to some authorities a contemporary or nearly so of Hosea. The last two chapters of the book are post-exilic, Israel is in touch with new peoples and endangered by new circumstances, and the writer's thought is moved by the spirit and tendencies of a later age. If this view is justified, the composition of Zechariah whether intentionally or not is curiously parallel to that of the book of Isaiah, in which many find three parts of varying purpose and date. It would be entirely in harmony with the fancy and humour of an Oriental writer to fashion the

complete book on the model of a composite work, triply-divided, associated with the name of one of the greatest of Israelite prophets, with whom he would trace some resemblance or reminiscence in the language and oracles of Zechariah himself.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRITINGS (כְּתוּבִים)

THE third division of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture is more varied in character and contents, and if the expression may be allowed more complicated and less amenable to general definition than those which have preceded it. The reasons which led to the inclusion of the various books, and their arrangement in the definite order in which they are found, are not entirely understood. Of one of them at least it may be said that if the decision had rested with modern scholarship and sentiment the verdict would have been overwhelmingly adverse. Another is so similar in general character to a Jewish 'apocryphal' work of approximately the same date, which is at least not inferior in sentiment and diction and by many is adjudged superior, that it is not easy to suggest a reason why the former has found a place within the Canon and the latter remains outside. Literary merit was of course not the sole criterion, perhaps not a criterion at all in the judgement of those who received or rejected books, nor as is shown by the latter instance cited was the worth of the subject-matter, judged at least by modern standards, decisive. Having been received however no other place could be assigned to

them, since they were neither Law nor Prophets, than in a third collection of sacred writings. It is possible, perhaps even probable that the separate Canon of the Law and of the Prophets had already been closed, and no later claimant to canonicity could find admission. Of necessity therefore, these books were formed into a third division of sacred Scripture, which then took its place in the Canon co-ordinately with the other two. There is a presumption therefore, but no more than a presumption in favour of a later date for the origin or writing of each and all of these books than that of those included in the earlier parts of the Canon. In some instances the traditional authorship of a particular work seems to have carried weight in determining its inclusion ; although we do not know how far these traditions were recognised and familiar in later times, or had become established at the period when the Canon was finally closed. An order or place determined on chronological grounds would explain for example why the books of Chronicles are at the end of the Hebrew Bible instead of finding what appears to us to be a more natural position by the side of the books of Kings, to which place the authors or arrangers of the Greek Canon transferred them. The shorter works which were clearly neither law nor prophecy were conveniently grouped together in a subdivision. Incidentally also this order of the books explains the expression used by Christ when summing up the judicial or arbitrary murders of which the Jewish nation had been guilty ' from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar ' (Matt. xxiii. 35). The death of Zachariah

by stoning at the hands of the people is recorded in 2 Chron. xxiv. 21; and the purpose of Jesus in citing these two is evidently to give the first and the last of which Scripture makes mention. In the narrative of Chronicles the Zachariah who protests against the people's sin and is murdered is said to be son of Jehoiada the priest. Zachariah the author of the extant book of prophecy is the son of Barachiah (Zech. i. 1). The last victim of Jewish violence is not improbably therefore to be indentified with the prophet. In Eastern usage 'son' may cover more than one generation.

The Hebrew Writings are usually divided into three parts. The first consists of three books that are musical and poetical, in the order Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, their respective subjects or themes being praise and prayer, moral instruction and warning, polemic doctrine and speculation. It is natural that the Psalms should take the first place, both from their intrinsic importance and because of the large part occupied by them in Jewish worship. In the re-arrangement of the order of the books in the Greek Canon Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon were interposed between Proverbs and Job, the former in that belonging to the same class of speculative composition as Job it seemed desirable to associate it also in position, the latter probably on account of its assumed Solomonic origin, Ecclesiastes, and by some it would seem Job also being attributed to the same royal author. Proverbs reinforces the Psalmist's praise with didactic precept and admonition. The book of Job completes the triad, not only for the reason that it is poetry of a high order worthy to stand by the

side of the others, but also because its theme is in many respects of a similar nature to theirs. Five shorter books were known as the five *Megilloth* or 'rolls.' Each of these was written on a separate roll of parchment or paper for convenience of handling and transportation. In complete Hebrew MSS or in MSS containing the Writings as a whole they are usually found in the succession Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and the same order is followed in printed Hebrew Bibles. The usage however was not always consistent, and variations are found within the MSS themselves. The subject-matter of the five is very diverse, and their convenient brevity appears to have been the main reason for their association.

The three remaining books, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles have no special inclusive name, and no obvious reason is suggested for their union in a single subdivision of the Canon. When the Hebrew order was broken up Daniel was removed to a place among the Prophets, his message and teaching being interpreted as a forecast of the future, in accordance with the later and narrower acceptation of the term prophecy. Ezra and Nehemiah, which are distinct in modern Bibles, formed one book, and similarly 1 and 2 Chronicles. Thus there were three books in this third subdivision, as in the first. Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, as being historical records, in the redistribution were assigned a place by the side of the great historical works of earlier days. Chronicles therefore closes the Hebrew Canon; and although it contains much that is of great value dating from earlier times and preserved in document form or tradition, its

position is evidence that as regards the final compilation of the work it is late, and it was perhaps the last, certainly among the latest of the Hebrew books to assume coherence and form.

The Psalter

It may appear strange at first sight that in regard to the Psalms also, as with the earlier Hebrew literature, there is no certainty of individual authorship. Perhaps it will bear repeating that their religious or spiritual value is not thereby in any degree diminished. It is of course true that the names of many Jewish singers and poets are familiar in history ; and of the work of at least some of them more or less is preserved in the Psalter as it is extant to-day. There is however no external evidence, beyond that of an uncertain tradition, which would determine beyond reach of controversy the authorship of any one individual psalm. Parallel conditions to these may be cited from the treasuries of any ancient literature that contains poetry and hymns comparable to those of the Jews. The Babylonian psalms have often been compared with those of the Hebrew Bible, and have been given the name because of their likeness in spirit and in style, and they are equally anonymous. In India also the names attached to Buddhist psalms, or of the ancient *ṛishis* of the Vedic hymns, are merely shadowy titles discerned through the mists of a tradition that is less likely than among the Jews to have preserved a real connection between reputed author and the hymn or poem with which his name is engaged. The Hebrew psalms have introductions or prologues which

describe the circumstances under which the psalm was produced, assign to it a descriptive or musical title, and in many cases add the name of a renowned poet or leader, in the majority of instances that of David; and in the Hebrew text these epitomes or headings are regarded as part or the whole of the first verse of the psalm. In our English Bibles, as in all other versions ancient and modern, they are rightly held separate. They embody a tradition and a name in regard to each psalm, the date and place of origin of which are unknown, but which cannot be later, as is shown by their inclusion as a part of the current authorised Hebrew text, than the early centuries of our era. The tradition may of course and probably does rest upon a much older foundation. It is evident that the older it is, the more would its prestige and authority be enhanced. In themselves however the titles do not unequivocally assert authorship. It is probable nevertheless that the composers of these titles, whoever they may have been, intended to imply or suggest the origin or writer of the psalm so described. The words for instance which are rendered in English 'a psalm of David,' do not declare that David wrote the psalm. Their exact purpose or meaning may be and are uncertain, but they are not equivalent to 'a psalm *by* David,' *i.e.* written or composed by him. It is most probable that they were intended to indicate that the psalm was derived from a collection of psalms which passed under the name of David; as at a later date the name of the same royal poet was given to the Psalter as a whole, as the name of Moses was conveniently used to denote the Pentateuch without pledging the user to an assertion of Mosaic

authorship in whole or in part. The traditions embodied in these titles therefore are certainly early, and they are not likely to have been invented. To reject them altogether and without consideration is as unjustifiable as to misinterpret their meaning and over-estimate their worth as evidence. It is not easy to appraise their exact value either in general or in any single instance.

It remains therefore that the circumstances of composition and the date of a given psalm can only be inferred, after due weight has been assigned to tradition, from internal evidence, from the style and diction, the requirements and temperament of the writer, his protest against or praise of his environment; and the inferences thus drawn, though they may strongly confirm tradition, can never in themselves be decisive with regard to any individual author. They will range in degree from the merest conjecture to a practical assurance of certainty. The assurance however will never be more than practical, sufficient for all practical purposes, but not adequate to rebut all doubt or to convince the gainsayer. The obvious circumstances of the psalmist, for example, of misfortune or triumph, of war or peace, will have often recurred in the history of Israel; and so far, his age and date will remain indeterminate. Thus then as was found to be true in regard to the Torah and a not inconsiderable portion of the Prophets both Former and Latter, considerations of authorship or exclusive appropriation were not greatly regarded by the original writers of these Hebrew songs. To them the message was paramount, the expression of felicity or dejection, confession of sin or thanksgiving for

deliverance ; and the hymn of praise or prayer was left as a legacy to the people, for future generations to repeat, enjoy, and to make their own. It seems to have been only at a later date that anxiety arose to know who wrote these great words, to render to them the homage due, and to perpetuate their names in tradition.

The titles to which reference has been made, which attach to the several psalms the name of David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, or others, are usually interpreted, and probably rightly, to indicate the source from which the psalm was derived, when it was inserted into or made part of a collection of psalms. Apparently there existed for instance, anterior to our present Psalter, a volume or collection of hymns which was current under the name of David the king. The name was not intended to suggest the Davidic authorship of each and every composition found therein ; any more than, to adduce a modern parallel, ' Wesley's Hymn-Book ' means to a modern reader that every hymn printed between its covers is by John or Charles Wesley. Without doubt Jewish usage which conferred the name implied thereby the belief that some at least, perhaps the majority of the psalms included were due to David himself as author. It is in the last degree improbable that the belief was entirely mistaken. Thus in the titles a psalm or song ' according to David ' indicates that the psalm is excerpted from such a collection. Most of the psalms in the first book of the Psalter bear his name ; and it is a natural inference that a number of poems or compositions thus assembled together formed the earliest hymnology of the Jewish nation or Church. It is indeed part of the generally accepted theory of the compilation of the Psalter, that the whole was gradually

developed from pre-existing collections of hymns, which had a separate perhaps local circulation and bore various names like that of David or belonged to the musical repertoire of the 'Precentor,' or 'Chief Musician.' By this title is meant probably the leader of the Temple choir. The Jewish division of the Psalter was into five such books, as it appears in the English Revised Version, and these were apparently formed in chronological order, the Davidic collection being the basis and first beginning of all. Whether the fivefold division was in intentional imitation of the five books of the Torah is not known. It is noticeable that a large number of the psalms in the later books are either wanting altogether in a title, or carry a descriptive title without a proper name. The few that bear the name of David were evidently no part of the earlier collection, but gathered in at a later period in the belief that they were authentic compositions of Israel's great king. As far as it goes the comparatively late date of their inclusion tends to invalidate the correctness of this belief.

That the Psalter was in reality so formed, not all at one time and in one place, but by successive accretions to a nucleus of early and acknowledged authority, is confirmed by the language and style of the several books. Not uniformly or always but in general the diction and character of the language in the later books belong to a later and more developed stage of the Hebrew tongue, and differ very considerably from the stately and classical language of the earlier psalms. On the basis of linguistic or literary character alone it would be necessary to postulate a not inconsiderable interval of time between most of the compositions for

example of the fourth and fifth book and those of the first. There is also a marked difference between the books, or even between parts of the same book, in their preference for one or other of the divine names; and in this also has been recognised a parallel to the usage of portions of the Pentateuch. It seems entirely natural and probable that the Jews should have modelled their sacred book of song upon the form and manner of their reverenced Law-book. In general also the several books of the Psalter have varying purposes or destinations. They are personal or individual, expressing the mood or circumstances or actual necessities of the writers; communal or ecclesiastical, in which the church or nation appears before God; or ritualistic, intended for the celebrations of the Temple service, and these are usually the latest in regard to age and origin. It is not possible however rigidly to determine dates or to assign the exact order of composition of the several psalms. A moderate and general statement is all that is justified by the facts. It is probable also that some of the psalms are of composite authorship, parts of compositions originally distinct being accidentally or otherwise joined together. Psalms or portions of psalms also are found to be repeated in different places and in varying connections. It is evident that all this is entirely natural, in accordance both with the divine method of oversight as far as we are able to discern or comprehend it, and with the 'working hypothesis' which scholars have framed to express their understanding of the facts and features of the Hebrew Psalter, and to present them in a coherent and reasonable theory.

There is not much further that need be added with

regard to Hebrew psalmody. If the Old Testament book of melody and praise is unique, it is not the last word of Hebrew poets. There has been an almost unbroken succession to the present day, men and women inspired with the spirit of their fathers and their fathers' God, giving utterance to noble and timely thoughts. Not all the Hebrew psalms of course are on the same high level of true poetry and deep feeling. Judged by a literary standard or by a standard of spiritual insight and generous tone or thought they do not all attain to the front rank. There is no hymn-book in the world however, in which tried by any standard there is so little that is mediocre or uninspiring. And this value is independent of the determination of questions of authorship, and is almost as impressive in a competent translation as in the original tongue. No one who is appreciative of religious literature or conscious of religious need will ignore the Hebrew Psalter. Within the limits of moral and religious thought the variety of theme and expression is as remarkable as the constant faith and reverence of the authors and their realisation of the presence of God ; they seem perennially to renew their youth in adaptation to every age and among the utmost varieties of people and language. The temper of a few of the psalms, which has been described and indeed does appear to be vindictive, needs no excuse for its intensity and the force of its expression. No one who has lived through the Great War and read much of its journalistic and ephemeral output will fail to understand the spirit engendered by constant strife, cruelty, and oppression, or be disposed to cast a stone at the ancient Hebrew poets, who so evidently had explored the

depths of calamity. This also is true to experience. The better side is the almost universal tenderness and serenity, the assured confidence and hope, the loyalty and trust in God, the warmth of religious feeling, and the unfailing patriotism which is but rarely darkened by any mistrust of the nation's future. These and other qualities which it would not be difficult to enumerate have given to the Hebrew Psalter a secure place in the heart and estimation of all to whom faith and prayer are familiar and the practice of the presence of God no unknown or untried experience in the life.

Proverbs

To most readers probably the book of Proverbs appears the least interesting of all the books of the Old Testament. And of the three treatises which constitute the so-called Wisdom Literature—Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes—it seems to be the least satisfying and the last to present or enforce an appeal for a second and more attentive perusal. It is true that some passages in Proverbs, for the most part brief sayings, are perhaps as well known as any in the older Scriptures. Not a few phrases and sayings also are eminently ' quotable,' and remain in the memory even when their source is forgotten. Thus for instance the hymn in descriptive praise of wisdom will not be readily surpassed from the stores of any literature. The general impression however, at least in reading through from beginning to end, is somewhat that of sameness of character, of an almost tedious repetition of similar or identical thoughts, where the thought does not gain in impressiveness by its reiteration. The conclusion would be

less than just to the artistic composition and setting of the whole. It is however a not unnatural reaction from the apparently disconnected series of moral sayings, encomiums and warnings, associated together without definite plan or traceable order of succession. The wonder is not lessened, and the difficulty of a due appreciation is perhaps increased when it is recalled that this is a third together with Psalms and Job of the three poetical books of the Hebrew Canon. So defined and understood its rhythm and form, even in a translation, will be seen to give evidence of wise and vigorous thought, clothed in a not unworthy garb; though the several parts of the book will be found to be of not equal literary, or if the truth is to be told religious worth.

It is however evident that a collection of wise and moral sayings of this nature has a definite place and function in the Jewish statement or canon of Scriptural doctrine and truth; and that without a 'Book of Proverbs' the Hebrew Canon would have been seriously incomplete, at least on the practical and experiential side. If the teaching of the Proverbs is not profound, it is practical and in touch with human nature in its best and perhaps also in its worst aspect. It deals with the practical problems and difficulties of human society from a point of view which came little if at all within the scope or purview of Law and Prophets; and it is as universal and even less national and restrained than the Psalms themselves. The title of 'Wisdom' or 'Wisdom Literature' which was attached to the book together with other treatises of a similar character within and without the Hebrew Canon, was apparently intended originally to indicate

this. It was wisdom concrete and practical, not soaring or idealistic, designed to be a guide to right living and to point out the dangers of paths on which to tread was to go astray and make shipwreck of life. It might not inaptly be termed a Manual for a godly life; and the contents are as miscellaneous, and as little admitting of definite and orderly classification as life itself. In the book indeed as a whole no regulated order or plan is apparent, which according to our modern conceptions of a Manual would suggest a natural order of development or keep the related subjects combined and in their definite place. And if this miscellaneous character with its repetitions and returns is to be explained in part by a theory of compilation from various sources and of successive not simultaneous additions of unlike origin, this is not entirely adequate to the mind either of authors or compilers, if the words are to be used in the plural. The way of the East is not as the way of the West. A parallel has been suggested in compilation and arrangement with the Muhammadan Qurān, where no definite or thought-out plan or arrangement of the whole in its *sūras* or chapters seems capable of being traced, and to an Occidental student reasonably bewildered by its rapid changes and involutions the book reads best if you begin at the end.

The book of Proverbs therefore is a manual of ethics, to the completion of which both the mode of collection and the variety of authorship suggest that no precise date can be assigned. If reliance may be placed upon the introductory words or heading of the twenty-fifth chapter additions were certainly made to an earlier nucleus or edition long years after the reign of Solomon.

Yet later presumably the two final chapters were added, 'the words of Agur' and 'the words of king Lemuel.' Of these nothing more seems to be known or reasonably conjectured. The earlier chapters of the book also, which are attributed to Solomon and which differ both in form and in the manner of attribution, confirm the hypothesis of a gradual compilation, of like character to that of the Psalter, extending over a considerable period of time. Discourses addressed to 'my son,' or 'sons,' are followed by the ode or hymn in praise of wisdom. In the tenth and following chapters however, with a new title 'the Proverbs of Solomon' suggesting a new and later collection, the son is not directly addressed, but his qualities and virtues are described in contrast with the foolish, the scorner, or the wicked in general. The style and language confirm the effect produced by the book itself with its several headings; and judged by this criterion the later parts were not written or combined with the earlier until a comparatively late period in the history of Israel. The ethical value of the book however is not impeached or impaired by doubtful questions of date; and its moral teaching is throughout supported and enforced by a convinced and strong religious faith. The writers do not parade feelings or convictions distinctively Israelite. There is no reference for example to the Law or the Prophets. And accordingly the book of Proverbs is perhaps the least national of the books of the Old Testament, in that it gives no sign of having been written against the background of Israel's history. The authors however are at one in their belief in the supremacy of God, in His sole divinity and absolute power. The text of the

book might well have been taken from Deuteronomy, 'the Lord our God is one Lord.' The writers are monotheists, and there is no suggestion or hint that any other doctrine concerning the Deity is to be conceived. He rules with unerring wisdom and justice, and demands just dealing from man. Doctrines of this nature in their completed or final form might not unnaturally be assigned to a comparatively late period of the life of Israel. It is well however to be chary of positive statement in view of the little that is really known of the progress or development of theological thought in the nation. On the other hand the references to an after-life are in accord with earlier ideas of the world beyond the grave. Sheol is void and comfortless, the bourn to which all go, a residence without opportunities and without joy. The wise man will find in the present sufficient occasion for service and thanksgiving, and he should utilise all his powers in obedience to God and in generous and righteous dealing with his fellow-men; for there is little differentiation or scope beyond the grave.

Job

If the book of Proverbs is to be characterised as perhaps the least interesting to most minds of the books of the Old Testament there can be little doubt that to very many that of Job provides the largest fund of interest and wins abiding sympathy. It is a drama of human life and thought, such as might be acted out upon the steppes of Arabia to-day, except in so far as even the 'unchanging' East has begun to revise its outlook and to accept if not to welcome

new conditions and a new rule of life. There is unrivalled attraction to most readers in the inscrutability of the author, the forcefulness and variety of his imagery, the eloquence and studied character of his language, the setting of his action in the midst of the ruined fortunes of his chief spokesman or hero, the interpreter as is usually believed of his own thoughts, the boldness of Job's challenge to the Almighty, and the dramatic intervention of the latter out of the whirlwind to solve or suggest solution of problems the background of which had seemed to be dark mystery beyond the penetration of human insight, however just and reverent it might be. The more closely the book was scrutinised the more evident became the genius and skill of the writer who living centuries ago apart from the parade and march of the great world had tried to think out some of the wide problems of human interest, and had left on record a great masterpiece of literary craft, wherein he endeavoured to present the answer to the whole, to which his thoughts and reasoning had seemed to conduct him.

In the Hebrew Canon the book of Job is the third of the group of Poetical books, and is included with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. Its place in this category is fully justified, discussing as it does questions of human experience and morality, and endeavouring to find a way through the difficulties that beset man in forming a right conception of his relation to the Unseen. Few books, it may be permissible to write, have been more misunderstood; and few more variously interpreted, or the chief aim of the author more differently conceived

and presented. Neither in interpretation nor in comprehension has the last word been uttered; the work is too great to be readily exhausted of its suggestiveness or meaning. The first condition of a real understanding is appreciation of the ' atmosphere ' of the book. The writer is not composing in his study, with lamp at elbow and a store of midnight oil. He is out in the open air, under the wide heavens, sitting in the twilight among the tents, listening to tales of the long ago and exchanging thoughts and words with his friends who, the day's work done, turn their minds to wonder and speculation and praise ; and he weaves the whole into a story compact of imagination and fact, of the fruit of his and their silent meditation and conversation, grafted on names and incidents that tradition has recorded in her book of famous men. The narrator is living over again and as it were experiencing again in his own person a real human drama, a drama of calamity and recovery, of sympathy, misunderstanding, protest, and vindication. He is not engaged or concerned in the first instance at least to write a philosophical treatise. Philosophy is present, of course, as in every exposition of truth. Primarily however the book is a human document, narrating the story of integrity maintained under trial and false accusation, of patient endurance under suffering yet strained to the utmost, of fidelity proved and character and honour restored, and of a kind of worldly justice which is not indifferent to the restitution of wealth and prosperity. In the background throughout is the Unseen, silent until the swift and dramatic intervention at the close which puts an end to all controversy, the faith of

the writer discovering itself in his confidence in the final justice of his God.

The general character of the book makes it all the more difficult to assign to it a date ; and those to whom questions of this nature appear important have speculated much and differed widely as to the period at which it was probably written. The story was not invented by the writer ; and it does not seem to have been conceived by him as of recent happening, though this perhaps will be disputed, but to belong to a more distant and legendary past. It is however vividly conceived and presented as though enacted before his eyes, as it is certainly reproduced in his thought. The author again does not obtrude himself and prefers to remain without a name. Within not very narrow limits the book might have been thought out and composed at almost any time, and authorities of varying competence have in fact selected periods many centuries apart as the supposed epoch of its appearance. An external feature of the book, of which full account must be taken, is that the diction and character of the language employed are historically late as compared with most of the books that stand before it in the Hebrew Bible. The motive and course also of the theories set forth are supposed to imply a not very early period of Jewish thought and reasoning. Perhaps the majority of scholars at the present time would agree that a date during the Exile or in the early post-exilic period is most probable.

The story of Job is a whole, not a mosaic of different parts, extracted from various sources and periods, more or less ill-fitted together to form a poem or book in the volume of Hebrew Scripture. This does not

imply and it is not intended to assert that there are no joints, no discrepancies, no additions or omissions, where a copyist's eye or hand has failed him, or a later writer has thought that he could improve on the original work and has accordingly pruned or inserted at his free will. Probably all these tendencies or accidents have played a part, not very great or significant in the history and final result, as in so many perhaps all of the literary products of Hebrew antiquity. To strip off on the one hand and to cast away, as many expositors and interpreters have done, the introduction and the close of the book is to leave its central and main portion an unexplained enigma, deprived of the key which to the Oriental reader gives it zest and meaning. And on the other to break up this central part, the poem as contrasted with the prose setting of the prologue and epilogue, into two or more parts the independent contributions of different authors without relation to one another and in imperfect harmony is not only to impair the unity of the whole, but to deprive the argument of an important perhaps essential element, without which its statement would be defective, and the plea for judgement would seem to fall short of a full presentation. The whole is the work of a master mind, thoughtful and reverent, pondering over life's vicissitudes and the incalculable changes of fortune, and endeavouring to find an issue through its reasonings and uncertainties to faith in a supreme and righteous God. He must be allowed to seek and to find in his own way; not as a Western student or commentator thinks he ought to seek and to formulate in definite terms a conclusion more satisfying to the ambition of the human intellect.

He is guided to an issue greater and broader than any attainable by the intellect alone, which is found in the realm of trustful faith. And there is no indication whatever that he set out on his quest or sought a conclusion on the cold and severe lines of dispassionate reasoning, or failed to light up his story with the warmer flame of emotion and love. In the light of the composition and method of the whole it may be permissible also to add that the divine inspiration works by way of the imagination no less than by the reason or the pen, and that human thought though untrained in and careless of systems of human logic may yet faithfully reflect the meaning and purpose of God.

Job is an Arabian sheikh, wealthy in flocks and herds, with the qualities of a chieftain of his lineage and descent, combined with, perhaps it would be more correct to write controlled or dominated by a steadfast faith in God. He is not therefore a Jewish prophet, apparently not a Jew at all either by race or religion, though the simplicity and strength of his faith would not ill befit the best of Israel's seers. His home-land is Uz, a name and country that have not been certainly identified, but the few recorded features of his position and life are most nearly in accord with the characteristics of the Arabian peninsula or adjacent and similar lands. There is no reason to suppose that the name is an invention by the poet. On him, living in prosperity and security, there comes a rush of calamity, the secret springs of which we are allowed to see in the malice and permitted devices of the Satan, the adversary of God, who has attended the assembly of heaven's hierarchy, 'the sons of God,' and has poured contempt upon the

sincerity of Job's motive for service. He is allowed to make trial of Job's integrity to any extent, provided only he does not strike at his life. The succession of calamities, in their exact detail hardly of course credible and not intended to be literally understood, sweeps away all Job's possessions, destroys his family life, and leaves him crippled and diseased in person, with apparently no prospect before him but that of an early and miserable death; so much so that his wife can conceive of no other issue, and advises him to hasten it by 'blessing' God. Reverses of fortune of this nature and to a like extent are not unknown in the West. It is the dramatic suddenness and completeness of Job's overthrow, and the moral and spiritual teaching derived from his experience and example, that have rendered his history of so universal an importance and interest.

The appeals and arguments of the three friends who come to condole with him on his misfortunes make little impression on Job. They are represented by the author of the book as advocates of an outworn theory or doctrine, that guilt and punishment are always and inevitably equal and opposite, and that Job's sore suffering is therefore evidence of some grievous sin of which he is bearing the penalty. It was necessary in view of the conclusion to be reached, that this creed or doctrine prevalent as it would seem in the writer's day should have its full statement; and the friends in their speeches harp upon it with little variety, only one of them, Eliphaz, appearing to have a glimmering of any further or higher consideration. Characteristically also, for these Eastern debates seldom pursue what to us would appear a direct and logical course, Job pays

little attention to the argumentation of his friends, and neither explicitly denies nor argues in refutation of their doctrine. It is their insistent condemnation of him and the urgency with which they attempt to bring home to his conscience his supposed guilt that is the motive power of his appeal to God. In effect that appeal is made on the ground that theory or no theory and whatever may be the cause of his personal calamity and loss, it is within the knowledge of the Almighty that he is innocent, sinless in thought and deed and undeserving of such suffering. It is this appeal, urged almost to the point of violence and presumption, that gives the key to the real meaning and purpose of the book. Job does not enter upon a strict refutation of the arguments, such as they are, that have been produced. The author intends it to be understood that in his view this was neither necessary nor worth while; creed and belief have advanced to a higher position, and have gained a wider outlook and a more profound understanding. In Job's appeal however, to borrow a dramatic phrase, the stage is set for the serious conflict, and it is realised that the issue will depend not upon any imperfect human assumption or argument, but upon the unerring judgement and knowledge of God. Job has taken his cause and the vindication of his character to the tribunal of the Almighty. There the determining and final verdict and judgement will lie.

There is further no indication that Elihu and his intervention are regarded with due attention by Job and the three friends. His arguments and inferences remain equally unnoticed and unanswered, and for this and other reasons his speeches have been supposed

to be a later addition to the original drama or dialogue. They give expression however on the human side to considerations which have or may have an intimate bearing on Job's case, which it is natural should be present to a younger man, although they have failed to find a considered place in the established doctrines and theories of his elders. Elihu exhibits all the impatience of a young man with the narrow and stereotyped views of old age. Essentially he develops and emphasizes a theme implicitly stated or suggested in a previous speech by Eliphaz, who is apparently the most liberal-minded and least prejudiced of the three older friends. Eliphaz had suggested, or had seemed to suggest, though with no great directness or cogency, that the suffering of Job and other men might conceivably be referable to some inscrutable reason or purpose of the divine will, which nevertheless always and at all times contemplated the final good of the sufferer. The hearer or reader of the drama knows from the prologue what is concealed from the immediate actors how entirely this is true of the pains and losses endured by Job. The prologue does not indeed suggest or imply that suffering may have a remedial intention, and may be designed to foster the virtues of a higher character and a nobler life. Such a suggestion would there have been altogether out of place. Where the subject of the trial and experiment devised and carried out by the Satan had been emphatically pronounced to be perfect and upright above all other men, to hint that there was room for improvement which might be effected by the drastic measures of the Adversary, would be to stultify the whole and call into question the judgement of the Almighty.

It is this truth, and this moral aspect as it were of suffering, that Elihu brings forward. The last word on the meaning and cause of human calamity and distress has not been said by the friends. Until it has been said and the fullest knowledge that is within the reach of man's experience or thought set forth, the plea and the arguments on the human side are incomplete, and the case is not yet ready for submission to a higher tribunal. This it would seem is the consideration which Elihu has found to be wanting in the previous discussion ; and from the manner in which the speaker is introduced it is evident that he is regarded as offering a most important and weighty contribution to the whole. Suffering is or may be of a remedial nature, that is it may be designed to secure moral improvement, a strengthening of the hold of moral principle and motive, and the general uplifting and stabilisation of the character, irrespective of the guilt or otherwise of the sufferer. It must be admitted that Elihu's statement is neither so direct nor so definite as might be desired. For this defect, if from the point of view of the writer it is a defect, more reasons than one might be urged. That this is his meaning there can be little doubt, and this is then the significant part which he is designed to take in the development of the drama.

It is in the main upon the purpose and speeches of Elihu that criticism of the poem as regards its unity of authorship has been concentrated. There is general agreement that in language and style these chapters differ considerably from the earlier portion of the book, and yet more perhaps from the overwhelming power and majesty of the divine utterances that

follow. They have less poetic feeling or strength, sustain a less constant and elevated tone, and the assertion is made with regard to them that the language has deteriorated and taken to itself a form which betrays alien and other influences. As regards the last contention it would perhaps not be unreasonable to urge that our knowledge of the chronological history and development or decay of the Hebrew language is insufficient to justify a confident verdict. In the judgement therefore of many readers and students of the book of Job, the chapters in which Elihu appears are to be regarded as a later insertion into the book, due to another writer who was imperfectly in sympathy with the thought and intention of the original author. On the other hand it has been urged as above that the contribution which Elihu makes is essential to the development and complete statement of the theme ; nor is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the distinct character and style impressed upon this portion of the book is intentional on the part of the author, in order to give individuality to his characters and to avoid the risk of a monotone. There is a difference also, more easily felt perhaps than defined, in the tone and attitude adopted by the three older men, which is perhaps an indication that the author was conscious of this danger, and endeavoured to eliminate it in the simplest way possible by distinction of language and style on the part of the several speakers. Eliphaz is the most understanding and sympathetic, Zophar the most wooden and dull.

It would not be difficult to find a parallel to the situation as regards this variety in Shakespeare, where

of course it is much more accentuated, or in any great dramatic poet early or late. If those are right who find in these speeches of Elihu something not quite worthy of the skill of presentation and poetic ability of the author of the preceding parts of the drama, it will be necessary to assume that the episode of Elihu by an inferior artist has displaced that which the writer himself inserted at this place to complete and round off his thought. The loss under such circumstances of the original chapter or chapters and the substitution of others is conceivable, and ancient literature would furnish perhaps more than one parallel. The arguments that are advanced however are not wholly convincing; and meanwhile the Elihu episode or speeches hold the field, and can hardly except for very strong reasons be rejected to leave a mere blank. Some contribution appears to be essential here for the full statement of the case required for submission to the divine judgement and decree. Admittedly the friends have not so stated it, and Job's urgent pleas and passionate declamation are too much *ex parte* to be regarded as a serious or final argumentation. If it is urged that the intervention of Elihu supplies the need less skilfully both in form and substance than would be expected that is perhaps correct; and it is true also that the text appears to have undergone here a more considerable deterioration and waste than in the earlier chapters of the dialogue. A decisive judgement that would command universal assent does not appear to be within reach. Moreover from a dramatic and artistic point of view a pause or interval would seem to be required between the final appeal of Job after

the exhaustion of the three friends to the unearthly tribunal, and the intervention of the Almighty in the whirlwind. At all events the effect of the divine intervention and reply is immeasurably heightened by the pause or halting as it were in the action of the drama. It is the breathless and expectant waiting before the breaking of the storm. The original interlocutors or disputants are perforce silent, having nothing more to add, and stand aside to wait and watch for the response. It might be maintained also that an immediate answer from heaven would have seemed too much like making God wait upon human demand. A desired interval of this nature could not be left altogether vacant and unfilled. Elihu comes forward and by his contribution to the discussion explains and gives excuse for the delay. It may not be unintentional that the part he takes is on a lower plane, a relief to the tenseness and urgency that have brought the action to the threshold of God's judgement-seat.

The answer which the writer finds and formulates is not that which Western thought would expect. It makes no attempt to deal with intellectual doubt, or to present a solution of problems of the world order on the basis of human reasoning and knowledge. It is not likely that the answer suggested is part of the tradition, or has been handed down with the original story which the writer has employed as a framework for his teaching. Nor is it possible indeed to determine the limits of his obligation to his predecessors, who may have and probably did treat of the same theme; but the conclusion which he sets forth with all the emphasis and amid all the pomp and majesty of the divine theophany is his own, the climax of thought and

faith which is true wisdom. In the utterances of the Almighty from the storm-cloud there is no counter-argumentation or refutation of the charges made by Job; nor is the short-sightedness or irrelevance of the hard theories of the friends exposed. The Almighty will not enter into the lists with a complainant or appear as a party to a dispute; nor does He essay to explain to human reason principles and workings which the mind of man as it is constituted is probably altogether incompetent to apprehend. This and the general character and subject-matter of the addresses of the Almighty make it evident how entirely misunderstood is the 'problem' of the book of Job when it is envisaged as merely intellectual discussion and research. The author lifts the whole above this level and into a different atmosphere, nor does it ever present itself to him as merely a problem to the reason, within the competence of the human mind to ascertain and determine. The prologue has already shown that there are considerations present and forces at work which are as much beyond human control as they are outside of the knowledge of Job and his friends; and the conclusion to which the author has been led, and which he presents as the final and adequate solution of every difficulty and dispute is not intellectual. It is above and beyond that, in the sphere of faith and communion and love. Essentially it is expressed in the confession of Job, when at length he has been led to see in the power and governance of God that which is beyond his knowledge and thought, and to make tardy but absolute submission to a just authority which he can no longer dispute or doubt: 'I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but

now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The writer means that here is the answer to all human inquiry and doubt, in the presence of God and in fellowship with Him. The best has been said and done that the wisdom of man can say or devise. Now the cause is brought to the tribunal and verdict of the Almighty. The divine revelation and demand require submission and trust before a superior wisdom and a beneficent and overruling power. Job acknowledges his fault, and confesses his need. He has made discovery of his own insufficiency and of the sufficiency of God.

Ecclesiastes

The third of the group of biblical books of Wisdom is known by its Greek name of Ecclesiastes. The author writes under the *nom de plume* of Qoheleth, rendered 'Preacher' in the English Version. Except in its quest for knowledge, and in part also in its form, it has little in common with either Job or Proverbs. The writer or writers—for there can be little doubt that the more reasonable explanation of the variety of theme and manner is a plurality of authorship—are at the close of their research, not at its beginning or pursuing its course. For the most part they appear to have been disillusioned by their experience of life, and those who find in the words 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity' a kind of text or descriptive label of the whole are not far in error. According to a not unusual literary device also Qoheleth proposes to give dignity and authority to his speculations and conclusions by presenting them under the name of Solomon, the typical wise

king of Israel. Except in this literary and imaginative sense he has no thought of course of identifying himself with king Solomon ; and none of his contemporaries would have thus misunderstood him. By early Christian theologians and writers however it was generally assumed that the origin of the book was really due to the wise king, and the first in time to refuse to admit the ordinary belief is said to have been Martin Luther, whose fearless and critical independence of thought did not hesitate to challenge here also the verdict of Christendom. Few scholars if any now would uphold this earlier view. Nor was it ever based upon any real consideration of the meaning of the introductory words or the design of the whole.

The interpretation of the Hebrew term Qoheleth, or Koheleth, is not entirely certain. The margin of the English version offers as an alternative 'the great orator.' The book itself, however, by which we should be disposed to judge, makes no pretence of 'oratory,' neither does the author 'preach' in the ordinary sense of the term. The Greek name Ecclesiastes is no doubt intended to represent the Hebrew Qoheleth, but it would be inadequately rendered by the English 'preacher.' In form moreover the Hebrew title is feminine ; and of the many suggestions that have been offered in explanation of this fact, including that of female authorship, none has been entirely satisfactory or convincing. Perhaps an abstract or indefinite meaning was intended, the writer proposing to set forth or give expression to the general view rather than formulate a personal judgement. If so, the nearest English parallel would

be that of Speaker or Chairman of an assembly. It must be admitted however that this interpretation is not commended or suggested by the book itself.

The author further makes definite claim, or it is made on his behalf, to be among the number of the 'wise'; by which is meant not a claim to superiority or monopoly of wisdom, but rather that he is a lover of knowledge for its own sake, and has given himself to research into the deep things of the heart and mind. It appears to have been a general rather than a specific title, descriptive of a class or school, who sought as the Greek philosophers did to learn the truth, and through the changes and illusions of the visible to find their way to the unchangeable reality. Definite resemblances have indeed been traced between the doctrines and conclusions of Qoheleth and certain schools of Greek thought, among which those of the Stoics and Epicureans have figured most prominently. Examples have been given of similar phrases and thoughts, in which it is maintained that Qoheleth is indebted to Greek predecessors, especially of the Stoic school, and lists of these may be found in the commentaries on Ecclesiastes. They amount to very little, and are far from proving the acquaintance of Qoheleth with Greek philosophy, or his literary or intellectual dependence on foreign masters. Neither the thoughts nor the phraseology are so recondite that they might not have been independently adopted or reached by a Jewish thinker; and the only really Greek phrase, which has an unusual or un-Hebraic ring is 'under the sun,' which is rather Alexandrian than classical Greek, and which alternates with the altogether Hebrew expression 'under the heaven.' There is

more to be said in favour of a debt to Buddhism. Missionaries and representatives of Buddhist teaching are recorded to have found their way from the East to Egypt in the time of the Emperor As'oka early in the third century before Christ, and to have there promulgated their doctrines of the vanity of existence and the duty and urgency of disentanglement from the affairs of this life. If Qoheleth were an Alexandrian Jew, writing in the middle or towards the end of this century he may well have been acquainted with Indian teaching, even if he had not come into personal contact with Buddhist monks. The doctrines set forth are essentially the same or similar to those of early Buddhism; but there is no proof of direct dependence. The possibility of such relationship may be admitted, but no further or more confident assertion of dependence can be made. The character and style of the Hebrew of Ecclesiastes indicate an advanced stage in the history of the language, and thus far are in harmony with the date above mentioned; and similar conclusions have been drawn from obscure references in the text to an 'old and foolish king' and a 'wise youth.' Identifications of this nature are precarious in the extreme, and inferences thus arrived at do not carry much weight. The Jewish school or schools of thought that engaged in the search for 'wisdom' appear to have flourished chiefly in the third century before our era, and the most probable conclusion therefore is that Ecclesiastes was written in harmony with the tendency of thought and speculation then prevalent.

There is no very close relation between Ecclesiastes and the two other books of Wisdom in the Hebrew

Canon. In form it approaches more nearly to Proverbs, but in thought and method it pursues a course entirely its own. The writer or writers appear to start on a random or discursive quest, that leads to no very definite conclusion. Then the search recommences, is conducted in the same desultory manner, with many striking sayings and pithy criticisms of men and things, yet returning dissatisfied upon itself. A reading of the book indeed is suggestive of a number of brief essays upon a given text or texts prescribed to students in a speculative school of thought, the general form of which is laid down, but freedom allowed in the course of reasoning to be followed or the statement of inference and experience. It would appear not improbable that this is really the connecting link between the different parts of this strange book; and this mode of compilation would be entirely in harmony with Oriental habits of thought and production. It is a volume of contributed essays, not the work of a single author. A doctrine of unity of authorship has been maintained indeed by some scholars, but it labours under many difficulties and is not convincing. The final summary or conclusion is given by the head of the school: This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

Outside of the canonical books but included in the so-called Apocrypha there are two or three works of Wisdom closely related both in form and substance to the book of Ecclesiastes; and the question has often been raised why Ecclesiastes found a permanent place in the Scriptures of the Hebrew Canon, while Ecclesiasticus was excluded. Perhaps we know too

little of the mode or circumstances of the formation of the Canon to be able to give a definite answer to the question. There is evidence also that the debate was raised among the Jews themselves whether Ecclesiastes 'defiled the hands,' *i.e.* was canonical. Similar themes and methods of presentment are found in both. They emanate from one and the same school of thought. And to many readers it has appeared that the balance of ethical and moral insight and worth was on the side of Ecclesiasticus. There can be little or no doubt that the author of the latter work was acquainted with Ecclesiastes, and since he wrote at the beginning of the second century before the Christian era Ecclesiastes must have been completed and in circulation before that date. Perhaps the simplest explanation of the canonical reception of the one and exclusion of the other is correct and should be accepted, that the Canon was finally closed between the two dates, and the later work could not therefore find admittance. The other apocryphal work to the author of which the book of Ecclesiastes was certainly known is the Wisdom of Solomon. None of these works are of theological or doctrinal importance, or contain definite statements of creed and faith, to take their place in the orderly development of Israel's doctrine and belief. The Canon of Jewish Scripture however would have seemed defective and its statement of the full-orbed truth lacking in an important ethical element, if the contribution of Qoheleth and his school had been altogether excluded.

In the Hebrew Canon four other brief compositions are included with Qoheleth in the second division or order of the Writings. They are known as the five

Megilloth or 'rolls.' Each was sufficiently brief to be conveniently written on a single roll of parchment or paper of moderate dimensions; and thus to be utilised and carried about with ease. The subject-matter of the 'rolls' is so diverse that it would seem that this brevity was the only reason or justification for their inclusion under a common classification or title. The order of the five is not invariable in the Hebrew manuscripts. Usually however Canticles takes pride of place; then follow successively Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and finally Esther; and this is the order adopted in the printed editions of the Hebrew text. In the Greek and later Canons of Scripture followed by the modern versions the five books were redistributed in place according to their subject or supposed author. Ruth for example was printed immediately after Judges, as relating or believed to relate to this period of Israelite history. Lamentations was inserted after Jeremiah, being credited to his authorship. Esther found a place with narratives of exilic and post-exilic events. And Canticles or the Song of Songs was believed to be the work of Solomon, and therefore in spite of the incongruity of subject was transferred to the company of treatises attributed to this king.

The most attractive of the *Megilloth* to popular or modern thought is the book of Ruth. It has been described as an 'idyll of country life,' and on that ground, assuming that its purpose is merely to set forth and commend the usages and amenities of a simple country experience in Israel at the period which it has in view, the propriety of its inclusion in a volume of Scripture has been impugned. The book neither

formulates theological doctrines, nor enforces ritualistic law, nor illustrates and emphasizes moral principles dominant in human life.. Scripture however claims to provide rule and order for the whole man, for his emotional and humane faculties no less than for the more commanding and austere. If the contention referred to were justified, other books perhaps would have to be excluded beside the book of Ruth. From the point of view of the Hebrew author or narrator a description of country life, whether idyllic or otherwise, is not comprehended in his design in writing. His purpose is in the first instance to place on record an account of the ancestry of David the king. In a narrative that commends itself by its directness and simplicity he details the origin and descent of Israel's great king, the founder of Israel's monarchy. And in the second place he wishes to explain or at least give precedent for an ancient and obscure form of surety or pledge, which had apparently survived to his own day, an essential element of which was the handing over of the shoe, as representing the whole man, that on which he stood. A similar significance has been and perhaps is still attached to the shoe in other countries as a symbol in contracts or promises. The extant book of Ruth makes no claim to have been written at the period in which the events recorded took place. The form of the narrative and its nature suggest a considerably later date. The story itself would seem to have been handed down in oral tradition or perhaps more probably preserved in writing in the genealogical records of the house of David. It has lost nothing in the telling either of simple dignity or of convincing effect.

Of the three remaining *Megilloth* little need be written. It is a curious combination that has brought together five short treatises or discussions on so widely divergent topics. They are alike apparently in the comparative lateness of their date and degeneracy of their language as compared with the books of the 'golden age' of Hebrew literature. The book of *Esther* records the traditional origin of the Jewish Feast of Purim in an episode or experiences at the Persian royal court, setting forth the constancy of the Jews of the realm in imminent peril, and especially the courage of Esther the wife of the Persian monarch. The book is written in a high-flown artificial style, and some of the details suggest that the tradition has made free with features of the narrative in order to glorify the part taken by the Jews. It is however true essentially to the manners and customs of Persia in the age of Xerxes as far as they are known, and there is no reason to call in question the basis of fact, or to doubt that it renders a correct account of the origin of the Jewish feast. At the annual celebration of the feast the book of Esther is publicly read in the synagogues.

Canticles or the *Song of Solomon* is an idyll of love and marriage, interpreted by the Jews universally as by most early Christian commentators in a mystical and metaphorical sense of the love of the soul for God and its longing for complete union with him. It may fairly be doubted whether mysticism or mystic suggestions were in the mind of the original author. Modern requirements and taste would have excluded a theme of this nature from any Canon of Scripture, and its use in the Christian Church has always been

rare and restrained. It may be maintained however that if Scripture is to deal with the whole man, no feature of his character or propensities can be denied a place. The difficulty or doubt with regard to the propriety of its admission is due to changed standards of taste and thought, and would not have been understood by an ancient author. The 'inspiration' of such a work is obviously on a different level to that of the prophets.

Lamentations, ascribed by tradition to the prophet Jeremiah is a lament or dirge over the fall of Jerusalem. It is therefore of later origin and composition than the destruction of that city and the Jewish Temple by the Chaldaean armies. The contents moreover are more miscellaneous than the title would suggest. The freshness and vigour of the thought, and the obvious sincerity of the distress and grief expressed, would seem to indicate a date not long subsequent to the fall of the city. There are many resemblances in phraseology and diction to the writings of Jeremiah. It is improbable however that the tradition of his authorship is correct, although it is expressly asserted in the Greek version of Lamentations.

The third division of the Writings consists of three books, and with these the Hebrew Canon comes to its close. Their character and subject-matter confirm the belief that the Canon was formed and determined gradually, the triple formation of Law, Prophets, and Writings corresponding to a real order and succession in date. Thus the latest books to be received into the Canon are in a broad and general sense the latest in time of composition, and occupy therefore a position

at the end of the Hebrew Bible. In this respect the redistribution of these three books according to their subject or supposed subject in the Greek and later Canons of Scripture was unfortunate, and in the case of one of them at least the results have been misleading in the interpretation placed thereon by the Christian Church. Whatever its advantages or the motives that prompted it the change of place within the Canon altered the perspective of these Writings, and led to their being regarded and interpreted in a mistaken environment, a perspective which has been finally rectified only within our own day.

The three works that are comprised in this concluding section of the Writings are Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles ; the two last which were later divided into parts, each forming one undivided whole, as 1, 2 Kings among the Prophets. The late origin of the second of these books is evident from the subject with which it is concerned. Narrating the events and circumstances of the return of the Jews from Babylon to Palestine it cannot have been completed until the history was known as a whole, although it might be and probably was based upon daily records of the events as they took place. Chronicles and Daniel stand each in a different category. The former relates the history of the kingdom of Judah, ignoring the contemporary kingdom of Israel, in a parallel narrative to that of 1, 2 Kings. If Chronicles had existed as a written work at an early date or contemporaneously with Kings, it would have been natural for it to have been included with the latter among the Prophets. On the hypothesis of an early origin no reasonable ground can or has been suggested for its

exclusion. The language and diction however are of a late character, corresponding to its position in the Canon. These and other considerations have led scholars with practical unanimity to regard as certain the late origin and composition of the book and to interpret it accordingly. It contains earlier material, the source or sources of which, the limits and extent of which, whether it were traditional and oral or written, it is impossible precisely to determine. It is composed from a different point of view and with a different aim to the narrative of Kings.

It is significant that the book of Daniel should be found in this latest division of the Writings. Its transposition to a place among the extant prophets of the Israelite kingdom has confused its purpose and relations. The type and method of teaching, of which the book is so striking an example, in so far as it involves teaching by symbol and allegory, would not in itself have been an obstacle to acquiescence in the early date of the book which seemed to be implied in its new position. Ezekiel also and the prophets who preceded him made large use of symbolism and visions as a means of inculcating doctrine and moral truth. The symbolism of Daniel however is of a different character. It is rather the veiling of actual events under the symbolic garb of visions and dreams, historical description by means of imaginary pictures, enigmatic and perhaps intended to be without significance to readers not in possession of the key. A preliminary anticipation or suggestion of this didactic mode of historical narrative in the disguise of symbols had been found in the later prophets of the Exile, as for instance in Zechariah. It was reserved however

for a yet later subsequent date, as far as our knowledge serves of the course of development of Jewish doctrine and belief, to utilise and extend this mode of teaching on a wider scale, and to make it the most popular and effective source of moral teaching. Universal history, and especially the history of the people of Israel, so disappointing in its mundane course and issues, was reviewed as it were *sub specie aeternitatis* and interpreted in the light of divine overruling righteousness and supreme control. During the earlier period of this doctrinal tendency, and at the springtime of this forecast of faith and hope, stands the book of Daniel; and its author found many to follow in his steps, and to develop and extend the method of teaching which he had practised. The position of the book therefore in the Hebrew Canon, in itself almost conclusive for a late origin and date, is confirmed by the character of its contents and the manner and style of its teaching. The author is a true prophet, not in the narrower sense of a foreteller of the future, although he does not seem altogether to eschew this rôle, but as Isaiah and others were prophets, a preacher of righteousness and interpreter of the divine will and ways to all who will listen to him. That his outlook is so greatly altered and in a real sense clarified and enlarged is due to the altered circumstances of his time and of the age of the world in which he lived.

The Hebrew book of Daniel therefore in its present form is not of early but of comparatively late origin. By most scholars it is believed to have been written in the former part of the second century before the Christian era. The arguments in favour of this date

are based upon the interpretation of the successive world rulers in the visions of the horns and of the great composite image as closing or culminating in Antiochus Epiphanes, the relentless persecutor of the Jews, who ravaged the land of Judaea and made Jerusalem desolate. The interpretation is most probable, though perhaps not entirely secure or beyond question in its details. That traditions and narrative from various original sources have been incorporated by the writer is evident. He is not inventing on a wholesale scale either his history or the veil of symbolism under which he shows it forth. It has been greatly to the loss of the Christian Church that the book has been so constantly misinterpreted and been made the subject of the most far-fetched and speculative inferences. Had its place in the Hebrew Canon been duly noted and understood much of this could hardly have arisen, or have gained convinced adherents and exponents. It was supposed to belong to the age and circumstances of the prophets with whom it was co-ordinated in the Greek and modern versions, and misrepresented accordingly. Only within recent years, as the years of a wider and more intelligent criticism are reckoned, has its exposition been placed upon a sure foundation, and its character and environment understood.

The writer conceals his personal identity under the honoured name of Daniel—perhaps that was his real name—who with Noah and Job is known to Ezekiel as one of a great triad of Israelite heroes of the faith, who though themselves tried and noble could not avail by their piety to save a sinful city. And to give verisimilitude to his narrative he represents

himself with three companions as carried to Babylon among the Jewish captives in the early years of Jehoiakim.[1] There he approves himself by his loyalty and wisdom, and accordingly is appointed the chief of three viceroys or presidents to whom Darius delegates the government of his kingdom. His experience is not unlike that of Joseph at the court of Pharaoh, and must often have been repeated in substance under similar circumstances at the caprice or ill-will of an Oriental monarch. The second part of the book which contains the so-called 'apocalyptic revelations' is by the same author, who therein gives free expression to his reading of history as the revelation of divine action and purpose in the clash of world empires. The writer is a Jew, controlled and actuated by Israel's faith in one supreme God, whose hand is upon all, determining all to a righteous and wise end.

It is not difficult to understand the fascination which the book has had for many minds in all ages. The writer recognises divine oversight and control and the action of the divine will in all the past and contemporary movements of history, and has no doubt that the same wisdom and supreme power will be manifest in the future and for all time. When however, as in much Christian literature, these events and movements are thrown forward into an imaginary future and are construed as definite

[1] This is the usual interpretation of the introductory verses of the first chapter of Daniel, but it is not clear that it is right. The author phrases his historical statements with a purposeful ambiguity which is entirely characteristic of writings of this nature. In the second verse he does not give any date for the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of Jehoiakim. This does not mean that he was ignorant of the date, or supposed the city to have been taken in Jehoiakim's third year. There may have been a later tradition to this effect, but it is not stated or implied in the text.

prophecies and sketches of that which will be at some conjectural period to come, opportunity is evidently offered to all sorts of imaginings and speculations, more ingenious than either profitable or interesting. The history of the interpretations of 'Daniel' is marked by the extreme follies of human misapprehension and credulousness. Fortunately there is a saner spirit abroad in our own day, which reads and values the book for what it is, not for what it might conceivably have been. The author gives a mystical and allegorical interpretation of parts of the great divine order in human events in the prosperity, succession, and overthrow of mighty kingdoms, the order which always and everywhere in his conviction and faith has its issues in righteousness. If the circumstances and details of the history of his age were more exactly known it would probably be possible to provide an explanation of his book which would be in every respect satisfying and complete. There is much yet that is obscure, especially in regard to numbers, which have been hopelessly confused in the course of transmission. For this uncertainty and difficulty the author is not responsible. On the horizon moreover as it were there are new and rising powers which will take their place and play their part in the divine economy. All of it is significant to those who have eyes to see and a ready heart to recognise in these events the manifested reign of God. When the end of the days will be he does not know. His faith however assures him that there can be but one end, beyond the rise and fall of the kingdoms of this world, righteousness vindicated and triumphant in the kingdom of the Most High.

It was an altogether new type and mode of teaching ; new that is to the Canon of Scripture. Almost certainly it had already established for itself a place in exposition and application of truth, and ' Daniel ' was not the first to use the method for the consolation and encouragement of his distressed fellow-countrymen. What was apparently new was that it was now admitted into the Canon and as it were authorised as a divine and inspired mode of exhortation and comfort. Later writers were not slow to adopt the same method. The book made therefore a distinct and not unworthy contribution to the variety and comprehensiveness of Scripture teaching. Every aspect of human life and experience was enlisted to set forth and to illustrate the divine ways, the principles of His governance of the world, and the approval with which He regarded those who were just and pure of heart. These truths the writer of the book of Daniel exhibits in a setting of imagery and illustration that is far removed from sombre and practical Western modes of thought, and therefore sometimes appears to later readers forced and unnatural. It is the Eastern fondness for poetry and mysticism, reappearing in a new garb. Above all to the writer and to all those who shared his faith there was the intense realisation of the presence and power of God in human affairs, which were universally controlled as well as inspired by divine wisdom. It was the Roman poet's thought again, but with a different underlying motive, *nihil humanum a me alienum puto*, because all is God's possession and empire ; or the Christian ' practice of the presence of God.' Both thought and conviction are worth recovery in our material and prosaic age.

The belief was very real to the author and to the men of his class and time, and he found it illustrated in the world around him as well as in the history and experience of the past. Its practical lesson he summarises in the last few words of his book: patience under tribulation with the faithful fulfilment of duty and confidence in ultimate justification and rest.

No book in the Old Testament has been so greatly misused as well as misunderstood as the book of Daniel. Two illustrations in detail may perhaps be given. It is commonly affirmed that the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar and the carrying into captivity of Jehoiakim are placed by the writer in the third year of the latter, being in contradiction to the narrative of Kings. There is however no statement to this effect in the book, it is a wholly imaginary and unjustifiable inference from the actual language of the writer. The author's historical accuracy has further been impugned in the assertion often made that he represents Belshazzar as perishing in the storm and sack of Babylon, whereas according to the Babylonian records Cyrus entered and took possession of the city peaceably and without fighting. No such assertion or suggestion is made in the book itself, nor is there a word with regard to the capture of Babylon, the entry of the conqueror, or the manner of Belshazzar's death. If anything is to be read between the almost too brief words of the record it is that Belshazzar probably perished by assassination on the fatal night of the feast and the stern writing on the wall.[1]

[1] The writing is apparently the *camouflage* of the conspirators, to create a panic, under cover of which they might carry out their nefarious designs.

The Hebrew style and language of the book moreover bear witness to an origin in an age not far removed from that of Ecclesiastes, Chronicles, and other late books of the Canon. Such features would seem to be inexplicable and contradictory if the author were a contemporary or near contemporary of the earlier prophets. Some chapters of the books also are in Aramaic, not Hebrew, and there are a few words borrowed or received from the languages of neighbouring peoples, Persian and Greek. These, as far as our knowledge goes, would not be likely to become current among the Jews in Palestine until after the Exile. In the book itself no explanation is offered for this curious change from the Hebrew to the Aramaic tongue. The latter is introduced suddenly and without preparation and is as abruptly abandoned. Many suggestions have been made in explanation, but none have been entirely convincing. Perhaps the occasion was merely some simple accident in the course of the transmission of the text which has resulted in the substitution of the Aramaic rendering for the original Hebrew. The real name of the author of the book, if indeed 'Daniel' is a *nom-de-plume*, is unknown. His knowledge of the circumstances and history of his own times seems to have been full and exact, and some at least of the difficulties and cavil raised in modern commentaries are due to our defective information with regard to these periods; in part also to the naïve acceptance of the State and other records of Babylonia at their face value. The figures given in the text have evidently undergone alteration and probably much exaggeration in tradition and copying. The record of numbers in an

ancient text is always less stable and reliable than any other element in the transmission; and this consideration alone would vitiate all attempts at a literal interpretation. The unity and consistent purpose of the book is throughout evident. The writer urges the duty of faith in God, of a patient courage in tribulation, and of a confident anticipation of the ultimate triumph of righteousness in the establishment of the kingdom of God vindicated and victorious over all foes. In more than one respect also the doctrines which he propounds appear to have advanced beyond the stage reached by Israel during the monarchy, and to owe something at least to the influence of Babylon and the Exile. To angels individually is assigned a place and they play a prominent rôle which is unknown or at least unrecorded in the earlier teaching but which is foreshadowed in the book of Zechariah. The writer moreover declares his hope in a personal resurrection, and this belief would seem to have succeeded to the desire or longing for a national resurrection and restoration, so long cherished in Israel. The influence of the book of Daniel on the New Testament book of the Revelation is evident and well known. Not less strong has been its influence on Christian thought and on the formation of Christian eschatological doctrine. Within the last half-century however its direct influence has waned, and is not likely to be revived. With the rise of a new type of doctrine and thought its importance is lessened and its direct work is probably done. It has however left a mark upon the teaching and forms of the faith of the Christian Church which will not be readily erased.

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Ezra-Nehemiah

The record of the events and of the experiences of the Jews at the close of the Exile and after the return to Palestine, which is contained in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, is of very great value. The contemporary annals or historical records of the surrounding nations are for the most part silent concerning this period as far as the Jews are concerned; their interest and attention lay in other directions. For the interpretation of doctrine and faith the tracing of religious development and the determination of the lines of religious growth during and subsequent to the era of the Exile are of decisive importance; and it is fortunate that historical setting and so much that is suggestive for doctrine and belief have been preserved in documents based upon and recording personal experiences. Historically the record of Ezra-Nehemiah takes up the narrative where the writer of Chronicles lays it down, and the last two verses of the latter, recording the resolve of Cyrus and his proclamation for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, are repeated at the beginning of Ezra. In the order of events therefore Chronicles precedes Ezra-Nehemiah; and the succession of the books was accordingly reversed in the Canon of Alexandria. It would seem probable that the Hebrew order is merely an indication that Chronicles was completed later, or at least was received into the Canon at a somewhat later date than Ezra-Nehemiah.

This historical narrative is unfortunately far from complete. The consecution is not seldom broken, all is not told that we should wish to know, and for more

than half a century from almost the end of the sixth century onwards, there is an entire interruption of the record. It is not only therefore that the religious motive is supreme, as in Jewish history generally which selects for more or less detailed record those events only in which a more direct manifestation of the divine wisdom or power is to be recognised, but it is evident that much has been accidentally or otherwise lost, and that the records regarded as a summary of later Jewish experience are defective through no fault of the original authors or of the sources on which they depended. Parts of the books both of Ezra and Nehemiah are written in the first person, and these parts are usually understood and without doubt rightly to have the high value of a direct personal experience. In other parts reference is made to Ezra or Nehemiah in the third person, and it is inferred that these portions are the compiled narratives of other authors. It is a natural conclusion therefore that the books as they exist are not throughout due to one and the same author, but that materials from various sources have been put together or combined into a single work. A modern historian works up his sources, passes the material through the crucible of his own mind, and presents the results as his own reasoned conclusion from the available data. The biblical writer adopted a different method, one which was in fact common to ancient practice, making extracts *verbatim* from the sources at his command and interweaving them into the texture of a more or less consecutive narrative. The biblical author in effect keeps himself in the background. The modern historian feels it incumbent on him not only to tell

his story but to interpret its lessons and point its moral. Either mode has its advantages. The author or editor of the whole in the case of Ezra-Nehemiah is generally believed on the grounds of similarity of style and treatment to be the same as the editor of the books of Chronicles. Parts of Ezra also are written in Aramaic, not in Hebrew, indicating that the writer here made use of an Aramaic source or sources for his narrative.

These later Jewish writers are as fully persuaded as any of the early prophets and preachers of the supremacy and sole sovereignty of the one God. It would not perhaps be an overstatement to affirm that theirs was a more settled and deep-rooted conviction than that even of their predecessors. The doctrine to which they subscribed is the background of all their thinking and the motive-power of all their actions; and as a doctrine is so entirely taken for granted that it hardly needs to be affirmed. Monotheistic belief possesses them and the community which they administer and for which they write in a fuller sense than that in which it more or less controlled the faith of the nation in pre-Exilic days. Whatever the influential or precise cause may have been the experience of the Exile led Israel to a new and abiding understanding of the character of her God, and an allegiance to Him that henceforth through the long-drawn centuries never wavered or proved faithless. Doubtless there were contributory causes, more than one. Apart from the witness of their prophets, to which it is evident that greater and more general heed was now paid than at any previous period of Israelite history, the conviction established itself

deeply in the minds of all that their present calamities were the consequence of their religious recreancy; and accordingly that the only hope for the future lay in a return to a truer and more constant faith. Distaste also for the deities and ceremonies of the popular worship of Babylonia, for the degrading polytheism constantly paraded before their eyes which reminded them of the evil customs of the land from which they had been driven, bred a reaction that contributed to impress a new and permanent character upon their religious faith. Post-exilic Israel, as has often been shown, had for the most part abandoned or left behind the tendency to polytheism, which was a marked characteristic of its wavering pre-exilic faith. The change which has proved to be neither weak nor evanescent is one of the most remarkable in all religious experience. Its influence may perhaps to some extent be measured, if the attempt be made to estimate the contribution of the Jew and his unshakable faith to the development and history of the world, and the difference and loss that would have been incurred if that contribution had been non-existent or withdrawn.

Logically regarded and in a chronological order therefore the books of Chronicles should precede Ezra and Nehemiah. The events which they narrate are antecedent to the exile. The few verses at the close which carry on the history to the beginning of the reign of Cyrus are of the nature of a chronological appendix, borrowed or repeated from the commencement of the book of Ezra. Logical sequence however in the stricter European sense makes little appeal to the Oriental author or writer. It is usually supposed that the position of the book is due to the fact that it

was composed or put into circulation and accepted as canonical later than Ezra-Nehemiah. There is no definite proof of this. Nor is the rule of the order unbroken, for in the so-called Spanish MSS Chronicles precedes Daniel. The Greek translators are responsible again for the alteration of the Hebrew order when they give to Chronicles its more natural place in association with the books of Kings. It was at a much later date, not until the beginning of the sixteenth century of our era that the Hebrew text followed the example of the Greek, and divided Chronicles into two books, as in our modern Bibles.

The main portion of the narrative is parallel to that of Kings, with the striking exception of the omission in Chronicles of the entire history of the separated kingdom of Israel. In this the religious prepossession or conviction of the writer is to be recognised; he will not acknowledge the claims of apostate Israel to a part in the heritage which belongs alone to the children of Judah and the kingdom of David, nor will he tell their story. Other portions also of the earlier history are passed over in silence; and in some not unimportant respects Chronicles supplements the previous narrative and provides additional details from independent sources. To some of these sources reference is made within the books themselves. In probably most instances they seem to be quoted *verbatim*, and they are woven together into a continuous narrative by comments or judgements passed by the unknown author or compiler himself. It is likely that the hand of more than one composer or reviser is to be recognised. The moral and religious interest of the work is throughout evident, and this indeed is its

chief attraction for the modern reader and student of Scripture. The faults and failings of the past are exhibited by way of warning for the present and future. The paramount duty of the worship and service of Jehovah is insisted upon, with minute and strict adherence to ritual and form. In the earlier parts of the book also genealogical records of much value have been preserved, illustrating the interest and importance which the Jews have always attached to the maintenance of an unbroken ancestral record. In every respect the writer shows himself to be under the influence of religious motives, a Jew to whom the right observance of the laws and ritual of the Jewish faith as he understood them was the weightiest matter, and he wrote or compiled his book to urge these things upon the attention and obedience of his compatriots. The history therefore is not a mere narrative of successive events but a selection of incidents and characters from Israel's experience designed to enforce the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the duty of implicit obedience to His revealed will. The mantle of the prophet has truly fallen upon the authors of this book, though they often seem to us to interpret the past and to read the lessons of the present too much in the light of a ritual observance that had become divorced from the spirit.

APPENDIX: *Apocalyptic.*

The name is inharmonious and perhaps somewhat unfortunate, but it has been generally adopted as a title or description of a form of doctrine or belief that

prevailed for some centuries among the Jews of the dispersion and after the return to Palestine. The justification for a brief reference to it here is that the foundations of the new doctrinal scheme or belief are laid in the Old Testament itself in the teaching and outlook of the prophets; although more perhaps has been made of its influence or recognition in the pre-exilic development of Jewish thought than the facts seem to justify. The word itself is of course an adjective, and is somewhat clumsily employed as a substantive with the significance of apocalyptic literature or doctrine, not seldom understood as implying or comprehending both. The representative of apocalyptic theory and teaching in the Old Testament is the book of Daniel, and in the New the Revelation of St. John. The likeness and close relationship of these lie on the surface and need no demonstration. Between the two however there is a considerable growth of Jewish thought and expression on the subject, the details of which can only in part be followed out in default of the necessary evidence. For some centuries after the beginning of the Christian era speculation in this form continued to exercise an attractive influence over at least some of the Jewish communities of the East ; and it was finally taken up and ' sublimated ' in the doctrinal beliefs of the early Christian Church, contributing to a considerable extent to give direction and form to its eschatology. The importance of the doctrine and of the corresponding development of thought was therefore very great. Its expression and influence however are rather extra- than intra-canonical. While Daniel is the chief representative in the Old Testament of apocalyptic

thought, similar doctrines and speculations are implicit in parts of the book of Zechariah and other post-exilic writing. Together they form the literary foundation, as it were, upon which the rich and varied eschatological beliefs of later times have taken their stand.

It would be a mistake however to exaggerate the influence of such doctrinal beliefs or teaching upon the Jews themselves within the period covered by the Scriptures of the Old Testament. By some scholars that influence has been altogether over-estimated and emphasized, and has been represented as controlling and inspiring all the later biblical literature. It is only the initiation of thought of this character that is here to be traced, and an indication of the direction in which it would proceed. How far such thoughts were dominant or even extensively adopted and made effective within the Jewish life of the post-exilic era the available data are hardly sufficient to enable us to determine. There is an extensive literature, which ultimately it is probable created or gave expression to general Jewish belief. Development has not proceeded far however within the limits of the Old Testament. There it is in evidence as a natural and progressive modification of Hebrew thought induced by the experiences and profound regrets and disappointments of the Exile, when these by reaction from the older faith gave rise to a wider outlook and new hopes. Ancient Israel in a narrow and selfish spirit had mistaken her vocation among the nations in spite of the efforts of her great prophets like Isaiah to enlighten her eyes and show her the way in which she should go. The glow of the apocalyptic vision

sent her forth on a self-denying generous missionary endeavour to win the world for the truth and to set up far and wide the kingdom of God.

Apocalyptic teaching therefore among the Jews was essentially a mystical and ideal interpretation given to the Messianic hope. It expressed itself in visions and revelations of the divine will and ways, as in the book of Daniel, and was intimately concerned to show the working of the divine purpose through and in the events and agencies of the present world. Conceptions and doctrines of a similar character are of course well known among other peoples, but they seem to have reached their highest development in Jewish literature and faith after the loss of national independence and the disappointment of the hopes of an earthly kingdom maintained and perpetuated at Jerusalem. How far the best and most far-sighted of their prophets ever shared these hopes and expectations is perhaps uncertain. By the majority of the people the promise of a Messiah was interpreted in the literal and materialistic sense of an earthly sovereignty and a monarch of the Davidic line. The overthrow of the kingdom of Judah and the patent weakness of the Jews in contrast with the surrounding empires, of whose power they had had so overwhelming an experience, turned the thoughts of all in new directions, and combined to give a spiritual and idealistic form to beliefs which had been crudely held in a worldly and materialistic sense. The conception and personality of the Messiah were transferred as it were from earth to heaven, and the thought of an enthroned king in Jerusalem was superseded by the conception of a superhuman divine lord, who should exercise spiritual

rule over a redeemed people. In the apocalyptic literature this thought of a divine and spiritual Messiah is dominant, and is developed with the most eager and persistent conviction, the motive and theme of ardent and picturesque exposition. The doctrine which is thus transformed and spiritualised never recedes to an earthly and material form. It is constant to the higher and idealistic interpretation. And however elaborate and at times unnatural its visions and imaginings may appear to be, and altogether opposed to modern beliefs or modes of representation, there was always behind them the power of a convinced faith and an inalienable hope.

Apart from its speculative and idealised future apocalyptic teaching remained true doctrinally to the prophetic tradition. Idolatry, as in the book of Daniel, was the cardinal and supreme sin against the Lord God, and his faithful servants resisted every temptation or command thereto even at the risk or cost of life itself. Jehovah is the one and only God, and all the images and idols of the heathen are but wood and stone. And thus repeatedly there is exhibited in parable and story, in dream and vision and waking experience, the victory of the truth over the claims and pretensions of the false gods, and illustration or forecast is given of the manner in which the purpose and will of the Almighty will be vindicated and carried to fulfilment. To no inconsiderable extent also this teaching offered a solution of the world-wide problem of the apparently undeserved suffering of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked in spite of or even as it often seemed by virtue of their wickedness. The early Jewish view that these inequalities

were temporary and accidental only and would be rectified before death, that the righteous would be recompensed in this life for his righteousness and the wicked stript of his ill-gotten gains and punished, had been proved in experience to be mistaken and incapable of being maintained either for the nation or the individual. The apocalyptic teaching asserted no less strenuously that divine justice demanded and would effect the due vindication of the righteous and the overthrow and humiliation of the wicked; but it transferred this vindication and recompense to the future, to the times of the Messiah, when the righteous man who had been unjustly depressed in this present life would be fully recompensed, and the evil doer on the other hand finally overcome and punished. Thus from an eschatological standpoint it was a doctrine of the complete and exact apportionment of reward or penalty according to desert, the award to be given and the claims of justice to be satisfied when the Messiah should appear to destroy the evil and to set up his everlasting kingdom. In these respects, a proportionate recompense in another world for the deeds done upon earth, similar doctrines have been held and taught at various times in other countries, in India and elsewhere. Where the Jewish doctrine differed was in the stress laid upon the appearance and authority of the Messiah, who was to be the divine instrument of the great act of restoration and vindication. The advent of the Messiah is the dawn of a new era, which shall never close down in depression or distress, but in which the righteous will enjoy for ever the merited fruits of his righteousness, and the wicked will suffer as he deserves for his

evil doings. In all these respects the spiritual beliefs and delineations of apocalyptic teaching were carried forward and adopted within the early Christian Church.

In the life of the Jewish people as within the Old Testament literature itself these features and new doctrinal developments were in sympathy with the ancient spirit of prophecy and carried on its work. It was not without reason therefore that 'Daniel' found a place in the Canon among the prophets. Other later writers and recorders of visions, who gave expression to similar thoughts and were imbued with similar convictions and hopes with regard to the future, have often received the same name. With all their extravagances the ancient seers of Israel would not have disowned these men as spiritual descendants. On the other hand the idealism and supramundane character of this teaching was in strong contrast to the literalism, the study of the letter of the Hebrew text, which the scholars and rabbis of the Jews carried to so great perfection and with so minute attention to detail. For the preservation of the Scriptures in their literal integrity it was fortunate and essential that men were found whose specialised studies led them in this direction. Apocalyptic teaching in its fervour of aspiration had its feet off the ground. In the maintenance and care of the Scriptures, in which the work of the scribes was of priceless value, the apocalyptists took no part, and it may not unfairly be said had no interest. Thus beyond and after the Jewish Canon of Scripture was closed the systematized thought and endeavour of the Jews moved in two directions, not opposed to one another, but apparently in entire independence.

The apocalyptic development sustained and extended the work and teaching of the prophets in a truly prophetic spirit. The schools of the readers and custodians of the sacred text with much labour and the most scrupulous care carried on the work traditionally associated with the name of Ezra, commenting upon the text as it lay in their hands and endeavouring to preserve it in minute and literal accuracy for all future generations. Both aspects or sides of national life and thought were essential, if the truth was to have free course. Without legalism there would have been humanly speaking no recognised or determined text of Scripture. Apocalyptic hopes on the other hand gave to their Scripture an idealistic interpretation, and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the future Vindicator and Redeemer of his people, and thus prepared the way for Him who was to be the Saviour of the world.

A considerable number of compositions of an apocalyptic nature are extant from the centuries immediately following the conclusion of the orthodox Canon of Scripture. They are part of a much more extensive literature that has not been preserved. Around them a large and important literature of comment and discussion has grown up in later times Among the best-known and most striking of these apocalyptic works are the two books that pass under the name of the prophet Enoch, the ' Book of Enoch ' and the ' Book of the Secrets of Enoch.' The dates of these compositions are not precisely determined, but they appear to have been written not long before the beginning of the Christian era. Other notable works are the ' Book of Jubilees,' perhaps of about the same

period, and the ' Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,' a composite work parts of which are probably as early as the second century B.C. The ' Apocalypse of Baruch ' is later. And the so-called ' Sibylline Oracles ' is a poem of miscellaneous content, written in hexameters, to which contributions have been made from various sources at different dates, combined into a more or less consistent whole within the early centuries of the Christian era. The literature is important not only for its own intrinsic interest but for the insight which it gives into the direction and movement of Jewish thought, and the forward light which it throws upon the formation and early development of Christian doctrine.

CHAPTER V

PARABLE AND METAPHOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

That not a little misunderstanding and rejection of Old Testament doctrine and teaching have been consequent upon the acceptation in a literal sense of phrases or descriptions intended to be metaphorical or poetical few would be found to dispute. It is not likely that the authors' contemporaries or hearers shared these misapprehensions. Even in our own time however it is not altogether easy to overtake the misleading interpretation with a general correction which should reach all ears. It has seemed worth while therefore to add here a brief chapter indicating in a very general way and exemplifying the extremely wide use of metaphor and illustration in the Old Testament Scriptures, a usage characteristic of Eastern writers, whose picturesque and highly-coloured descriptive passages are not intended to be accepted as statements of literal fact. To assert and realise that this is so is no impugnment of the authors' veracity. Perhaps the nearest parallel that can be suggested is that of the dramas and sketches of a European poet or writer. Western authors work on different lines from the composers of the East. Their exact and matter-of-fact accuracy would make no appeal, and

their logical arguments and syllogisms carry little weight with an Oriental clientele. Accordingly in endeavouring to appreciate the force and teaching of the Old Testament it is all important to bear in mind this distinction between East and West. It is true that modern facility and frequency of intercourse tend to diminish and perhaps ultimately will dissolve the difference. If this is the drab and monotonous end it is fortunately ' yet a great way off.' In the centuries before Christ when the Hebrew Scriptures were taking shape and for many subsequent years Eastern presumption and practice were dominant.

There are not many definite examples of parabolic teaching in the Old Testament ; and these are to be found only in the earlier and later prophets. Effective teaching by parable is not easy, either in the invention of the parable itself or in its application ; and the Jewish Church and the world had to wait for a few centuries ere the Master of that form of instruction appeared in Galilee. The most pathetic and moving of the older parables is perhaps that of the poor man's ewe lamb, chosen and petted after the manner of the East, in which Nathan convicts David of his sin. If however formal and set parables are rare, almost every page, even those which to a Western mind should embody the soberest statement of definite facts of history, is illuminated with illustration, metaphor, vivid imagination and description, and is coloured by the temper and thought and its lesson urged with the intense conviction of the speaker or writer. No colouring however in the Old Testament is for the sake of prettiness or embroidery. The oracles of the prophets would be as much misunderstood if construed

in this sense as when a pedestrian and literal interpretation is given to them. This does not of course imply that they are not true in the highest and fullest acceptation of the term. They are true as all statements of genuine conviction and purpose are true. It is perhaps our definition of truth that needs to be widened and expanded. The student of the Old Testament will read it with an ever-deepening sense of its veracity, its close touch with reality, and the marvellous insight and capacity of its writers. To interpret, describe, or even enumerate the metaphors of these books would be an impossible task within any reasonable limits. A few examples or illustrations may however be given, following as before the disposition of the Hebrew books themselves.

The Pentateuch or Torah, as it is ordered and read in our Bibles, begins with descriptive narrative and illustration, in which it is often far from easy to separate historical fact, as understood by the writer, from the form or clothing with which he has invested it. The history of the Creation for instance, the experiences of Joseph in Egypt, or the episode of Balak and Balaam, are set down as he has received them, and as they have been current in Israelite tradition. And the narratives as they stand owe much both of their attractiveness and of the uncertainties which encompass their interpretation to the traditional and popular form in which they are cast. Many of the difficulties and objections raised are due undoubtedly to a misunderstanding of the form and a failure to appreciate the spirit of the Scripture narrative. Where however narrative gives way to precept, commandment, and law, there is found as literal and compact statement

as in Ḥammurabi's Code. Not seldom also a misreading or error in translation of the Hebrew text is responsible for a current legend or popular belief. It is not always easy to disentangle the various elements of tradition, metaphor, or oral variation in the accounts as they have been transmitted. The good faith of the writers is perfect and beyond question. They do not however write or think as we do; and our interpretation of their words is often at fault.

The earliest narratives of Genesis are instinct with vivid description and metaphor, so much so that we are often unable to state in exact terms how the writers conceived for instance of the Creation or Fall. Probably they made no attempt to conceive them in the sense in which we endeavour to conceive the processes of nature. They were true to them, as they are true to us; not as scientific statements of facts or events, which they were never intended to be, but as representations and expositions of divine actions and methods in the world and with His people. And the once popular discussions as to whether the days of Gen. i. signified twenty-four hours or periods of centuries are as curiously irrelevant as they would be beyond the purview of the writers themselves. Similarly it is often maintained that the narrative of the Temptation and the Fall is entirely symbolical, and represents a fact and experience of human history, an awakening to a consciousness of guilt and shame, which is set forth under the symbol of the grasping at forbidden fruit; and that the details of the picture are filled in picturesquely to harmonise with and emphasize the central thought. Who shall say how

far the writer localised an actual Eden, invented or adapted types and stories to convey his meaning, or merely set down the tradition of what he had been told happened in the days of man's innocence? The ritual also of Israel's religious service and the sacrifices and observances of the Temple are all type and symbol, not an end in themselves but expressing a deeper spiritual purpose and meaning. The priestly vestments are not designed merely for the external adornment of the priest but to indicate especial separateness and sanctity. Sometimes, although not frequently, the symbolical significance is defined: the blood is the life. The symbol derives its importance from the thing symbolised. All language is of course full of metaphor, more or less degraded and literalised. The ancient Hebrew is no exception, but rather its most significant and complete illustration. The people and their records seem to be at the childhood of the race, in wonderment at the spiritual significance of all things; and no page, hardly a paragraph even of these early writings of the Pentateuch is without its metaphor veiling or declaring the truth in forms suitable to the apprehension and character of those to whom the message was given. Law and narrative alike have a significance beyond the mere verbal utterance or injunction. Truths are conveyed in flashes of light, which disclose as it were far-away vistas of meaning, perhaps only dimly apparent to the listener or learner, but revealing an ever wider and deeper significance as they are studied in the growing experience of the human race.

It is indeed difficult, often perhaps impossible, to determine where metaphor ends and literal or verbal

limitations begin, or to draw any clear line of demarcation. There are lower depths and evasive secrets of meaning which elude definition, and can hardly be measured or weighed. A familiar instance is the institution and observance of the Passover. Formally a Jewish festival, to be observed annually with certain regulations and a determined ritual in memory of a deliverance wrought for the nation in Egypt, it was never mere rite or ceremony, an unreasoning custom or habit without understood significance. In this light it appears the more strange that so rarely is mention made in the biblical records of the observance of the Passover by Israel. It either falls constantly and for long periods into desuetude, or the writers take its regularity for granted and make accordingly no reference to it. This last appears improbable, considering the importance of the feast and its history. It is more likely that the unsettled and confused conditions of life had in fact rendered its observance difficult or impossible and the injunctions with regard to it had in consequence been overlooked and forgotten. After its revival by Josiah there would seem to have been no further neglect, except as the circumstances of the Exile or Dispersion rendered the keeping of the Passover impracticable. It has been and is perpetuated among the Jews as a family or household rite, wherein its significance is definitely taught and emphasized; and taken up under other forms into the Christian Church it has extended its influence and as it were renewed its life both as a memorial of the past and a constant anticipation of future deliverance. The 'passing over' the threshold of the house of the Israelite in Egypt by the Angel Protector and Guardian

symbolized the constant presence of Jehovah with His people, and was a pledge and promise of His unfailing remembrance and care; and in Christian service the ancient Jewish type lives on, and has proved the power of a symbol to influence the lives and support the hopes of many generations and of the most diverse peoples.

Of the same nature are the warning or prophetic dreams of the Old Testament, the divining-cup of the Egyptian Viceroy, the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest, the ritual of the Day of Atonement, and other facts and observances of the life of ancient Israel. That the future is revealed in dreams is a very wide-spread belief, and has perhaps as much or as little foundation as that which represents them as a confused mosaic of long-forgotten experiences. The dream-vision of Jacob's ladder reaching to heaven, Joseph's dreams that he relates with so much wonder and pride to his brethren, the fateful dreams of the master butcher and baker in Egypt and of the Pharaoh himself are instances of a well-known and characteristic manner of thought and belief, from which no primitive or more civilised people have been entirely free.

Of the former prophets little need be written in this respect. The narratives of the entry into Canaan and of the weary and testing experiences of Israel under the Judges are charged with events significant of truths or obligations which the people are to read mark learn and inwardly digest. Some of these have been curiously misrepresented and their real teaching disregarded by later generations unto our own day; while naturalistic interpretations and explanations

have failed to satisfy, because they have begun with misunderstanding of the spirit. Jephtha's vow and the signal victory of Joshua over the confederate kings of the Amorites are instances of acts or events regarded as or intended to be significant. The circumstances of the latter at least seem to have been early misconceived, and an eclipse or partial eclipse of the sun, a ' silence ' or ' dumbness,' which contributed by the terror it inspired to the Amorite defeat, came to be thought of or believed to have been an actual stoppage or ' standing still ' of the heavenly lights. A characteristic Hebrew play upon words or sounds contributed to the misunderstanding. Similarly the vow of Jephtha has nothing to do either in intention or fulfilment with a supposed practice of human sacrifice among the Israelites.

Three well-known parables are related in the books of Samuel and Kings, that of Nathan to David after the death of Uriah (2 Sam. xii. 1 ff.), and of the wise woman of Tekoa to the same king, contriving the return of Absalom and his reconciliation to his father. Some of her words have entered into the store of proverbial sayings, widely known and prized for their shrewd insight and worth : ' We must needs die and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again ' (2 Sam. xiv. 14). A third parabolic utterance is by a king of Israel in answer to the foolish defiance of Amaziah of Judah : the thistle of Lebanon aspired to take to wife the daughter of the cedar, and its pride and life are suddenly crushed by the unheeding foot of a wild beast of Lebanon. The homely parable was as forceful and apt as its truth was proved in the overthrow of the presumptuous

king. Language and narrative, history and literary record would be poor and dull, if metaphor and simile, imagination and parable were crowded out.

The utterances of the Latter Prophets, as would naturally be expected from their different function and character, are more completely in metaphorical form, employing the most forceful illustrations and comparisons within their reach to express spiritual truth. Often also of course they are sufficiently direct in denunciation of sin and demand for righteous dealing and obedience to moral law, as direct and outspoken as any English judge. Their theme moreover is different from that of the earlier books. Statements with regard to actual history and historical events occupy a less place and are subordinated to the main purpose of exhibiting and pressing home the divine character and commandments; as in the instance of Isaiah's children or Hosea's experiences of unhappy marriage. Their teaching is set forth continually in metaphor, illustration, simile, and parallel. Acts or events are seen as it were in the mirror of imagination, which reflects them in a new and stronger light, and lends them a broader impressiveness. Nothing is isolated or individual, each is contrasted or compared with each, a part of the living moving drama of the divine government, in which man has interfered and still interferes by his sin. The language is in harmony with the greatness and the diversity in detail of the theme; lofty, high-flown, not seldom obscure with the very overflow of thought, but never commonplace or dull. The speakers or writers are quick to see a likeness, to press into their service an illustration from daily life or a parallel from history. They

utilise all the resources of irony, sarcasm, and invective, so that their oratory is instinct with vivacity and movement in a manner and to a degree that few if any Western speakers could impart to their discourse. Any one who has watched an Eastern reader or a Muhammadan preacher will easily reproduce many a biblical scene, and almost hear the tones of the prophet's voice. He does not stand stockstill, but sitting or standing sways from side to side, emphasizing his words with posture and gesticulation in the fervour of his feeling, eloquence, denunciation. Perhaps in part at least it is this feature of the prophetic writings which explains the reason that to a Western reader, unemotional and unsympathetic, the language of these documents so often appears to be abrupt and disconnected. The connection is supplied *vivâ voce* by the rhythm of the body, the flashing of the eye, the supple movement of the limbs, the rocking to and fro, the tense if subdued excitement which finds expression in physical gestures and signs. These all emphasize and interpret the prophet's meaning, and his words as read in cold print lack half their colour and intensity. Personality counts for more to an Eastern audience and in an Oriental orator than is perhaps easily realised by an untravelled student of the West.

Take for example Isaiah, the first and in many respects the greatest of the prophets. The book of his prophecies opens with parable and metaphor and simile; cedars of Lebanon, ships of Tarshish, vineyards and plots of cucumbers, cart-ropes and ploughshares, scarlet sins and burning tow, all familiar and self-interpretative to his audience.

Forceful and convincing as his words are in their English form, in which the original rhythm and movement are of necessity lost, the tone and person of the prophet lent to all his speech an impressiveness and convincing character, which imagination can only imperfectly reproduce. A similar effect is seen in the discourses and influence of great Christian teachers and evangelists of our own and former centuries, and played probably no little part in the sway exercised by Fathers and preachers of the early Church. The order also in which these prophecies are arranged in the written book may not be, and in some instances evidently is not the same as the chronological order of their delivery. It is not likely that Isaiah himself directed or determined the order in which they were set down. Perhaps the task was undertaken and carried through by one or more of his immediate disciples. But whoever was author of the arrangement, it was and is neither slipshod nor accidental in its origin, but purposeful and effective, and only loses much of its effect to us through difference of environment and in part also owing to the mistakes, confusion, and errors of a lengthy transmission.

The initiatory vision of Isaiah in the sixth chapter is of much interest from this as from every point of view—historical, psychological, or for belief and doctrine. If the order of the prophecies had been determined by a modern scholar or critic no doubt this chapter would have been placed first as an explanatory introduction to the whole book. There is force and emphasis however in its present position no less than aptness and suitability. The seer does

not come before his listening audience or later readers as unknown; he has already spoken with them, and needs no further introduction. The vision therefore may be set forth in all its spiritual beauty and intensity, without obtruding the personality of the prophet, and free from any danger of misunderstanding of his attitude. He has already asserted his influence and made known in part at least his character and message. It is not in fact altogether rare for a prophet or preacher to warn and to address his people before he has received the formal divine commission. Here Isaiah like Job is humbled to the dust in the immediate presence of God and by the revelation of His supremacy and holiness; and unlike Job, who stands as he has stood throughout the book alone though no longer defiant, the prophet associates with himself in humiliation and recognition of sin the nation that he loves. The difference is not without significance. Isaiah's regard for Israel is matched only, not exceeded by that of Hosea, and he is not as the latter one beside them but one with them. And when the paradox of his commission and its hopeless character are set before him—hearers who do not hear, seers who do not see, hearts dulled and hardened against the clearest warnings—there is no trace of reluctance, though he might well have been moved to draw back. At the last he is encouraged and re-assured by the promise of the faithful remnant. As the tree that is felled retains its root-hold in the ground and in due time shoots forth in renewed vitality of bud and branch, so Israel will live in the happier days to come, a renewed and purified people to the Lord their God. It is characteristic and worthy of note that no indication is given of

the effect of this revelation of the future upon the prophet himself.

It is all ecstatic vision, parable, and paradox, unreality from a narrow mechanical point of view, but intensely real to the prophet. Modern science and even modern psychological research would impose upon it a much more prosaic title. It is however these moments when the veil is withdrawn that are most real, at least to the recipients of the vision; but they can only be described in metaphor, in language that can never be adequate to their fullness or entirely convey their significance to another. The life-history of probably all spiritually-minded men and of all great teachers who sway or have swayed the minds of others contains such crises: Gautama, Buddha, Muhammad, the Indian Chaitanya, Martin Luther, and the Master Himself, the Christ, when He knew and overcame the power of temptation. The experience is perhaps not so unusual as it is often believed to be. In its most exalted form it seems to become more rare with the prophets later than Isaiah. They are less emotional, or at least less uplifted and overcome by their emotion. There is as it were a growth of gravity, steadfastness in its literal sense. Parts of Ezekiel for example are as level, as steady and prosaic as any modern clergyman could desire. In all their writings however, as certainly would be the case in all their utterances, there is a quick breaking forth at times of the spirit within, as though the urgent prophetic spirit were too strong for the tightening bonds of conventionality and restraint. It is this element perhaps which often makes it difficult for a modern thinker or critical scholar to appreciate how readily and immediately change of style or subject

responds to varying emotions, and which therefore presents the temptation and opportunity to take to pieces the prophetic discourses and to rearrange and edit them on a definite plan and in logical order. The same tendency no doubt played a part in other Hebrew writings, and has not lessened the difficulty of their right interpretation. The prophets who succeeded Isaiah, though they may have lived in as strenuous times, were on the whole less dominated by emotion. The tendency was in the direction of restraint, less poetry and more prose, and the spirit of prophecy and its expression conformed more closely to the general uniformity of national thought and life.

For three long years Isaiah went naked and barefoot as a sign of captivity and distress. Yet earlier his three children bear symbolical names, one of which was to outlast Israel and become a symbol of permanent hope and confidence to all Christian peoples. The parabolic satire on the fall of the king of Babylon from the pride that aspired to heaven above the stars of God, consigned to the depths of Sheol and the company of departed and defeated kings, is unequalled for eloquence and keen mocking irony among literature of its class. The prophet again describes a highly-placed statesman as a nail in a sure place or the key of a house, and he writes of ensigns and standard-bearers, of leviathans and of the beasts of the field, of vineyards and pruning hooks and trodden straw, of the confusion and darkening of sun and moon, the earth turning upside down and staggering like a drunken man—the figure based probably upon the prophet's experience of an earthquake. The land is presented in mourning, the early ripe fruit falls to the ground,

the heavens are rolled up like a scroll, the sealed book with its unknown contents is symbolic of the wilful ignorance of Israel, the dial of Ahaz is appropriated and utilised to be a sign of restoration and comfort to his son and successor on the throne.

In the later chapters of the book, from chap. xl. onwards, there is a change in the character of the metaphors used. They are in general less specific and personal. The difference is readily felt, but it is subtle and not easily expressed in words. By itself it would not suffice to determine a difference of authorship. It is however in harmony with all the rest of the evidence that has convinced students of the reality of such a difference. The author or authors of chaps. xl.–lxvi. think on other lines than those of Isaiah, and naturally their thoughts find altered modes of expression.

If the historical portions of Jeremiah are excluded, his writings are hardly less full of metaphor and parable than the prophecies of Isaiah and of his namesake the so-called Deutero-Isaiah. Jeremiah however is less imaginative and realistic, and at times he seems so to be engrossed in the misfortunes of his people and his own that only the plainest and most direct language is suitable or competent to meet the need. In his distressful condition there is, as it were, no opportunity for rapture, no leisure to clothe his thought in colourful speech. He endeavours to drive home the lessons that he is charged to enforce in the plainest and most forcible language at his command. Anything more unlike the attitude of a 'weeping prophet' than the boldness of Jeremiah's indictment or the clearness of his warnings can hardly be imagined. He does not

spare sin or sinner, and urges repentance and reform as the only way of escape with as much vehemence as Amos. He is possessed however as it were through it all with a stronger assurance of the divine mercy to the man who is repentant and obedient to the divine message. With considerable frequency moreover the same metaphors are made use of as by his predecessors and the same or similar figures employed.

An indication of the troublous times in which Jeremiah lived may be recognised in the many and varied illustrations drawn from warfare and the sufferings of a war-worn people and land: the battle-horse, the seething cauldron, the yoke on the neck, Zion ploughed as a field and its inhabitants 'slung out,' Rachel weeping for her children and refusing comfort, and the liberty of the sword to ravage and destroy. Names also are significant in the same manner: Tophet, Topheth, the valley of slaughter—the precise meaning of the word is uncertain, perhaps 'place of burning,' associated with all abomination, desolation, and idolatry; Magor-missabib, terror on all sides. The sights and sounds of nature are pressed into service, reminiscences as it would seem of early experiences at Anathoth: the lion in the forest, the swallow, crane, and bird of prey, the wild ass and the dromedary, the shepherds watching their flock, the potter shaping his clay, the labourer gathering the grapes, the sour grapes that set the teeth on edge, the figs good and bad, the snow on Lebanon. Few keener or more bitter thrusts were ever made than the prophet's denunciation of Jehoiakim and declaration of his fate after death: 'he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of

Jerusalem.' The last recorded act of the prophet's life is a symbol of warfare and conquest, the laying at Tahpanhes of the foundation-stones for the throne of the Babylonian conqueror.

The prophet of the Exile, Ezekiel, is perhaps the greatest example of teaching and preaching by way of allegory. It must have been strange to watch him sketching on a potsherd Jerusalem besieged, breaking with his own hand through the clay wall of his house, creeping forth as it were clandestinely bearing on his shoulder his little furniture, shaving his head and beard and weighing the hair and dividing it into portions burnt or scattered hither and thither. Well might the passers-by or the crowd gathered around him ask what these things meant, and some of them be disposed to ridicule the prophet with his strange behaviour and enigmatic acts. To the modern student reading the chapters consecutively the stream of illustration, vision, or parable seems overdone, and the acted parts make little appeal. The discourses or teaching as delivered to the Jews in exile were not of course consecutive, and would not be likely to convey this impression ; and again the difference between Eastern and Western temperament should be borne in mind. Some of his visions and allegories are among the most striking that have ever been recorded even in the history of ancient and modern mystics ; and against all ridicule and misunderstanding Ezekiel was fortified, his forehead adamant as flint, by his confidence in his God. He is in sympathy also, more as it would appear than his great predecessors, with modern thought in the stress he lays upon the individual and

his personal responsibility: the soul that sinneth it shall die; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him; everyone shall be judged according to his ways. As orally delivered with the force of the speaker's personality behind them these discourses with their picturesque incidents and illustrations would be far more impressive than as read in the level monotony of a book.

Not all of Ezekiel's parables and visions have been relegated to forgetfulness in later times. Apart from those which like the early vision of the four living creatures and the wheels are difficult of interpretation, many owing to the liberal and modern character of the prophet's thought have been adopted by the Christian preacher, and metaphorically explained in a sense that was perhaps foreign to their original meaning. Ezekiel himself is set as a watchman over Israel; and he is bidden to 'eat' the roll, symbolic of the reception and entire assimilation of the word of God. In a further vision he is carried to Jerusalem that he may see for himself the iniquities there practised. A seething cauldron with its contents of flesh and bones well boiled is a symbol of the hot vengeance and destruction which the king of Babylon will execute upon Jerusalem; the severity and soreness of the calamity is declared when the prophet is bidden to show no sign of mourning on the death of his wife. The same king of Babylon is likened to a great eagle, that comes to Lebanon and breaks down the lofty tops of its cedars. Ezekiel sees in a vision a man with an ink-horn, taking count of the righteous and unrighteous in the city, followed by the destroyers; a throne

set in the heavens like a sapphire stone; a man also with a measuring-rod to measure the temple and its courts, to set forth the form of the ideal and perfect house of God; or he takes two sticks to symbolize divided Judah and Ephraim, and they become one, joined together in his hand. The better known of the prophet's visions however, which have currently received a metaphorical and actual interpretation beyond anything that they can have conveyed to him or to his hearers, are two, the vision of the valley bestrewn with dry bones, and the living waters flowing from beneath the threshold of the temple and becoming a great river. The latter has been made to symbolize the growth and beneficent influence of the Christian Church and the kingdom of God. To the prophet it probably indicated the prosperity and permanence of the Jewish nation. The dry bones have become the constant emblem of the dead and hopeless condition of the sinner, until his spirit is vivified by the breath of God.

The worth and teaching of the three great prophets in this respect merit appreciation and a setting forth even at some length, not only because of their supreme importance to Judaism, but on account of the contribution they have thus made through the Jewish people to the moral and religious history of the Christian and pre-Christian world. From the religious point of view their influence was and is of outstanding and permanent value. Great as are the lessons of Israel's history, recorded and interpreted in the Pentateuch and the 'former prophets,' in the somewhat shadowy forms of JE and the rest, whom or which modern criticism has endeavoured to clothe

with flesh and blood; and great as is the interest historically of the successes and failures of the chosen people; neither interest nor importance can compare with the teaching of the chief of the prophets. The study of Comparative Religion has not disclosed a religious leader or teacher on a level with Isaiah. The earlier speakers and writers, instructors and guides in the law and commandments of God, are not to be depreciated or put on one side. Their convictions and faith were strong, and they disburdened themselves of a real message from Jehovah, history interpreted in the light of moral duty, with a conviction and force not often or easily paralleled. And probably in spite of recent assertions to the contrary and conjectural readjustments of Israel's religious growth and development, the prophetic work could with difficulty or not at all have been done except on the basis and with the background of known legal precept and enactment. The writers were all prophets in the widest and best acceptation of the term—Moses, Elijah, Samuel, and many others—preachers, *literati*, theologians, men of God. Above these however as teachers as far as we know them stands the great trio. There is no need to apportion and seek to determine any exact gradation of position or worth. To some one will make more urgent and more convincing appeal; to another, another; and they are all handicapped as it were for us by their difference of outlook, and the store of associations and prepossessions, so unlike the inheritance which we have received from Christian forefathers. With them lay the secret of Israel's greatness and the burden of the interpretation of Israel's spirit.

The books and teaching of the minor prophets may be more briefly passed in review. Not because they were unimportant, or had a less valuable and effective message to deliver ; but because so much less is known concerning them, and comparatively little of their exposition or writing has been preserved. With the exception perhaps of Jonah they teach nothing different or essentially new. In him and in the post-exilic prophets there is as it were a broadened outlook due to their greater experience of non-Israelite peoples and a fuller appreciation of the universal sovereignty of God. At the most however they look upon and expound the same truths of the divine nature and will from varied points of view ; and their conviction and understanding of His purpose and ways are thus set forth in the light of their wider experience and in some instances at least of a personal life that has been profoundly modified to illustrate and exemplify the divine thought and will.

The teaching of the minor prophets is no less enforced or illustrated from first to last by vision and allegory ; and it is not always easy or possible to determine where imagination and metaphor end, and the literal begins. It is not because they are less visionary in the highest and best sense that they may be here submitted to a briefer review. Their language and thought are at least as metaphorical and allusive as those of any of their better-known predecessors or contemporaries. Their teaching is not less earnest and comprehensive. But it is difficult for our prosaic age to realise the force of such teaching and appeal. For that reason alone it would be worth while to emphasize the universality of this mode or method of

exposition and enforcement by the prophets. The modern preacher or writer describes, draws his outline, fills in his colours and makes his picture, and steps aside to look at it while he calls upon his audience or readers to admire. The Hebrew prophet sees the vision as real, not imaginative merely or the conscious product of labour and thought. He is a 'seer' in the fullest meaning of the word, and to him the vision is true and real, and has a far higher value than the sights and sounds of the external world. The measure of the success of his preaching is the degree in which he can convey to others the reality and intensity of his conviction and thought. So the *ṛishis* of ancient India 'saw' the verses and poems in which they rendered their homage to the gods and enshrined their religious beliefs. A partial illustration or parallel may perhaps be drawn from the sculptor also, who is said to see in the rough block of marble the finished form of his work of art.

Of the prophets whose writings are earliest of the Twelve in the order of the Jewish Scriptures—it is misleading to write or speak of them as 'Minor' and the order is of course not chronological—Joel presents perhaps the greater enigma. Commentaries have been written to differentiate or to identify the overwhelming locust host and the army of northern invaders, maintaining now that the former were an actual plague in the prophet's thought and experience, or again that he used them merely as pictorial of the devastation wrought by the human foe. His picturesque and vivid descriptions seem to borrow features both from the locust swarms and from the more formidable onset of the warriors. The same characterisation

seems applicable to each, and as Joel makes no attempt to distinguish or to separate the various strands of his richly-woven portraiture, so his commentators are at a loss to assign each element of his description to its appropriate place. It would not be incorrect to assert that both invasions are present to his prophetic thought and imagination. The locusts are real, and the devastation caused by them, of which the writer certainly had personal and actual experience so that it is no hearsay description that he gives, appears to him to simulate and forebode the greater and more cruel devastation at the hands of the northern foe. His apprehension and experience embrace them both. Symbolism and metaphor are combined and closely interwoven with the reality, and no fixed or constant limit on either side can be drawn. Then there comes to him the conviction that the darkest cloud has its silver lining. Even under calamities as heavy and overwhelming as these repentance will avail and a new and richer life may be begun. 'I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten . . . ye shall be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord your God . . . my people shall never be ashamed.' Israel is to be unafraid, for the Lord is in the midst of her. And in words the music and beauty of which match the exaltation of the thought and have rarely been excelled, he depicts the greater future of a restored land and a repentant and rejoicing people, when prophecy and vision will not be the monopoly of the few, but upon all flesh the spirit of the Lord shall be outpoured. Zion shall be Jehovah's perpetual dwelling-place, and He will be a stronghold and refuge to His people. It is a marvellous picture, realistic in all its

details, intensely Eastern in its character and mode of expression, consistent and life-like, yet so vivid and highly coloured as almost to defeat the imagination which endeavours to combine its elements into a consistent and recognisable whole.

A similar difficulty of interpretation to that which readers find in Joel is met with in Hosea, a prophet of an earlier date. When he describes his relations with a faithless wife, is he merely tracing an imaginary experience from which he may read Israel a lesson of the changeless love of God, or is he setting down real details of biography? Most commentators now regard his words as a narrative of actual personal history, pregnant not only with grief and suffering for Hosea himself, but conveying in fact and by example the teaching of the abiding love of Israel's God for His errant and sinful people. Doubtless they are right in their interpretation. His narrative, however, presents the facts of a personal experience in a light made the more intense and distressing by the prophet's strong feeling and imagination. He is neither callous nor under any illusion. And the chapters therefore in which he lays bare his sad experience are not commonplace prose nor mere decorative poetry but the outpourings of a loving wounded heart, in which he will use all the trials and disappointments of an unhappy wedded life to set forth the force and enduring passion of the divine love for Israel, rebellious as the nation has been and heedless of His commands. It is picture and parable, against the dark background of a woman's sin, of the ceaseless unmerited love of God that refuses to be cast off or discouraged.

The book of the 'prophecy,' the preaching of Jonah

is perhaps the most natural and 'modern' story in the Old Testament. It might be transferred to a modern record of missionary effort and success, and with a few changes of name and apart from the marvels by land and sea might be accepted as a narrative of recent missionary endeavour. Until Nineveh is reached, if exception be made of the prodigy of the sea-monster which after all is no more wonderful than the graphic stories circulated in our own days of the sea-serpent, the story is simply and naturally told by a writer who knew the ways of sailors and was no stranger to the perils and strange creatures of the deep. He was acquainted with merchandise and travel, and had seen or at least heard authentic reports of far away cities, and of their vegetation and environment. It is no doubt a parable of suffering as the fruit of disobedience to the divine command, of human petulance and discontent aggravated by sore illness, perhaps a sunstroke, and wounded pride, above all of the infinite pity of the Lord extended not only to ignorant men and women but even to cattle. No theory of inspiration requires the literal truth of every detail of the story; but the contention that the whole is due to the imaginative skill of a late writer setting his own thoughts and teaching in the framework of the supposed experiences of an ancient prophet is as artificial as it is difficult. That it was written down only late after a considerable period of oral transmission and tradition is no doubt sufficiently probable. The narrative is, however, indefinite or silent exactly upon the details of time or place upon which a later author would be inclined to demand or invent information. That it thus rests upon a true tradition of

personal experience need not and should not be questioned. For the rest the unknown author is more concerned with the teaching which he wishes to convey concerning the divine mercy and the all-embracing character of His regard and love for all peoples of the earth.

The prophecy of Nahum shares with the book of Obadiah alone among the Twelve the definite title of a vision. It is a preliminary warning as it were to his readers that the description and picture that he lays before them is not to be taken as bare literal fact or as having for its object the mere iteration of actual events. The picture is seen through the eyes of a visionary. In the highest sense it is all realistic and true ; but not necessarily so that each detail of the vision is to be equated to an actual occurrence in the drama of Nineveh's overthrow. Of the reality and completeness of that overthrow, whether imminent or more distant, the prophet has passionate assurance ; and he employs all the wealth of imagery and metaphor at his disposal to set it forth. He has neither seen it with the natural eye, nor is there any suggestion or reason to suppose that he has heard of it as an accomplished fact, so that his denunciation is of the nature of a *vaticinium post eventum*. There is not necessarily any literal experience behind his words, except in the sense that a man could hardly write so vividly and tensely unless at some time he had come into personal contact with the horrors of war and siege. The fundamental basis of his conviction of the impending ruin of the city is his assurance that cruelty and overweening pride must issue in destruction, an assurance fortified and made certain by his faith in a righteous and all-powerful

God. The colours of the picture are laid on with a vigorous touch, the descriptions are eloquent and realistic, the successive scenes appear to grow more and more life-like and convincing and the canvas more crowded with detail, until the drama finds its natural close in the final and hopeless overthrow of the proud city. It is an Eastern drama, written from an Eastern standpoint and with ancient Jewish prepossessions and convictions of the rule of a retributive God, not easily appreciated perhaps by an unimaginative European, but brief as its chapters are as great in its execution as in its conception and thought.

A few summary words of elucidation and comment should perhaps be added. English readers are too prone to read the prophets as though their writings were literal pedestrian prose, to be taken at a very prosaic face-value. For a considerable part they are imaginative poetry, not less true, as these pages are designed to contend, than the barest statement of so-called historical fact. Imagination enters into all the writing of history, which indeed could not without it be either conceived or set forth. The prophetic visions of the Hebrew seers were such as their training and imagination qualified them to see, and without doubt such as they actually saw, but saw with the eye of the spirit and mind, not with a material organ adapted to the objects of sense. On the other hand it is no less true that every vision has a background in the predispositions and personal experience of the prophet himself. A poet and patriot, whose life has been passed altogether in the gentle and quiet places of peace, does

not have visions of war, unless indeed history or literature or perhaps misgiving of danger imminent have set his imagination on fire. It is familiar to all of us how a personal experience becomes transfigured and coloured in the laboratory of imagination and thought, and it is not easy in spite of all our conscientious endeavour to make the description conform precisely to the event as it happened. The Hebrew seer did not make the effort, nor did his contemporaries demand it of him. That Nahum knew something of spoliation and war by sad and at the same time exultant experience no reader of his book will be disposed to deny. He builds up therefore his realistic vision on elements contributed by reflection and thought, by patriotic conviction and hot anger against cruelty and wrong, and by his unshaken faith in God.

One of the most difficult phrases in the Old Testament of which to determine the precise meaning and content is the 'wrath of Jehovah,' to which the prophetic writers so frequently refer, and which is evidently a very real and ever-present conception in their minds. The phrase is often duplicated, 'the heat of the anger of the Lord,' 'the fierceness of His anger,' his hot anger. In all instances it is represented as breaking forth against sin and disobedience, and manifesting itself in penalty and suffering. The phrase and its application are well exemplified in the brief utterances of the prophet Zephaniah. How far was the thought of an angry God conceived by the prophets in a metaphorical or merely picturesque sense, or to what extent was it in earnest and realistic, and on the analogy of the wrath of an earthly father manifesting itself in consequences that were visible and calculable?

The answer must be that to most at least of the Hebrew writers, especially in the earlier periods, the words did not at all or only in a very slight degree convey a metaphor. The consequences of the divine wrath against sin were to be seen everywhere around them in pain and punishment, and Israel's preachers and prophets were unceasing in their declaration of the necessary connection of these two and the inevitable results of evil doing. Hebrew thought and exposition of the doctrine thus conceived and formulated were always realistic and expressed in material terms. It was only with later experience and reflection that a slight and incomplete approximation was made to what would be called a more modern and sympathetic view. To a modern thinker endeavouring to assign meaning and content to the phrase it is in the first instance and always metaphorical, neither comparable to the wrath of man nor expressing itself in physical effects. He does not conceive of God as like a man subject to gusts of passion and distress more or less justified and controllable. 'God is angry' with wickedness 'every day.' The Divine wrath is not a changeable intermittent phenomenon, but a steady force persistently and ever working against sin, and making for righteousness as truly and powerfully as the divine love. World-wide experience has shown unmistakably that no such force is resident universally and triumphantly in man. Unless then it operates 'from above' its supposed operation would be concluded to be delusive, and its hoped for and credited fruits a chimera; and the pessimist is justified that the general movement of the peoples in character and ethical practice is downward through moral decay

to moral death, and there is no prospect of a high or permanent advance. The prophets and their contemporaries believed that they saw the results of this 'anger' in everyday individual and national life, and they recognised its justice and its power; and many so believe, perhaps not to the same extent or in exactly the same manner, at the present day. Most men however would acknowledge that even assuming the Hebrew point of view the effects in the world are less easily discernible, more latent and unobtrusive than the prophets believed. To the latter the direct action of the divine wrath and love upon human experience and life was a postulate of thought, and they were as confident as any of their successors can be of the final issue, although they interpreted and expounded the mode of action in an entirely different, in a literal and direct manner, which would be unacceptable at the present time. Yet the issue at stake is the same. The Divine passion against sin, working continuously and victoriously in and through man is, as the Hebrew prophets foresaw and declared, the only possible alternative to decay, disruption, and death.

In the post-exilic prophets a new and simpler type of vision appears, and metaphor and parable are reduced to their lowest terms. The character of the language and the spirit of the teaching seem more modern, and as it were in general nearer to us. The obscurity and bizarre nature of illustration or oratorical deliverance have for the most part been superseded by a simpler art of instruction, a truth national or individual that it is desired to inculcate is conveyed in an acted scene or picture sketched with a few broad lines and in plainest colouring. The portentous or miraculous

element, so prominent in some of the earlier prophets, for example in Amos or Ezekiel, is brought down to a minimum, and the writer reproduces for the most part in imagination the ordinary everyday scenes and experiences of daily life, and utilises these to inculcate moral lessons and warnings. A man with a measuring-line, a candlestick of gold, a winged roll, chariots with varied coloured horses, two sticks or staves to which are assigned symbolic names, of these and similar material the staple of the prophetic teaching is composed; and in each instance the interpretation of the vision or parable follows. To those familiar with the Gospels it is all reminiscent, it would be more correct to to write anticipatory of the unique parabolic teaching of Christ. The subject-matter of the teaching is the same as in their predecessors, the righteousness of God, the hollowness of hypocrisy, the selfishness of pride and indulgence, the crime of disobedience to the divine commands, but the mode or method of exposition has undergone change. It is as though a new form of instruction were needed for a people disciplined by adversity, whose eyes had been or should have been opened by the experiences of exile and the proved fallaciousness of hopes based upon a mistaken literal interpretation of the promises and an earthly restoration of the Jewish kingdom. The strong overpowering mastery of passion and prophecy, so marked in many of the earlier discourses and writings, is gone; and in its place there is a more quiet spirit and style, not less convinced or convincing, but moving on a lower plane, comparatively unexcited and unadorned.

Thus the change in the prophetic mood is in harmony

with the change of outlook and expectation, both their own and that of the surviving remnant from the Palestinian kingdoms. It signifies that the people had been chastened by adversity, and now from an altered point of view needed to be taught as children are taught the first lessons, the alphabet of the doctrine of God and of His purposes and will. The teaching culminated and was as it were crystallized in the interpretation of 'the day of the Lord.' This indeed had been stressed by former prophets, notably by Amos, and made the theme of warning and exhortation. The conception it would seem was never very far away from the thought of the nation or its leaders. Its significance and the implied metaphor however had been grievously misunderstood. In the light of later experience and as interpreted and emphasized by the later prophets the thought assumes new form and takes on added definition and importance. Not seldom it appears as though closely impending, but its intention and issues are always moral and spiritual, not crudely national or material. Nor is it without significance also how large a place the day of the Lord occupies in the thoughts and utterances of Malachi, the last of the series of the prophets. There is thus a definite approximation to the later ethical interpretation of the day, which sees in it the decisive vindication of Israel's faith in her God and the era of the advent of Israel's deliverer from the distress and bondage of sin.

The use of figure and similitude in the Hebrew *Kethubhim* or Writings is so patent and familiar that little further need be written. This is not true of

course of all of them, for the books that are historical within the ordinary acceptation of the term have little use for metaphor or parable. These approximate more or less in scope and intention to our modern prose narrative or history, useful and reliable, but not elevating or picturesque. The character also of the parable or illustration has undergone a change, not wide or far-reaching but distinctly perceptible, in that it seems to be more human if the term may be allowed, with less of the element of the superhuman and marvellous. And it concentrates itself also in some respects on the future, as for instance in Daniel, in seeming despair of the present which is beyond salvation, while the future may at least be imagined or depicted as radiant with hope and the promise of better things. Elsewhere the books discuss the great moral problems and contradictions of human life, as for instance in Job and some of the later Psalms, with a sobriety and conscious sense of their importance which are foreign to or at least untouched by the pre-exilic literature, and which do not lend themselves to metaphorical treatment. In harmony with changed conditions and environment their view is wider and their outlook if at times hesitating and doubtful more tolerant and generous than was possible to a thought concentrated on the hopes and fears of a self-contained national life. It is all full of interest and significance, and contains much that apart from its position in a Scriptural Canon would be accounted great in literature as well as in speculation and thought. In these it is above all instructive to watch and trace the forward movement of the mind, launched on a voyage of discovery, as it urges its way upward and onward

under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit and the promptings of experience and research.

The movement of thought and its representation in metaphor and parable is also as has been already indicated towards an apocalyptic and realistic view of the future. From the more general point of view this therefore has been already discussed. But in these later books as less definitely or consciously in the later prophets the divergent trend of thought hitherto in the background is accentuated and comes forward with larger claims to recognition and authority. On the one hand there is the school as it were of literalism, which finds its sufficient foundation in the letter of the law, and occupies itself with verbal exposition, with the niceties of verbal criticism and the exactitudes of grammar. Its adherents have discarded metaphor, and seek the plainest and most direct methods of speech. The other tendency follows directly in the line of ancient prophecy, modifying only its subject but not its method, and finds in metaphor and simile the highest possible expression of human thought, and indeed the only means by which that which is superhuman and spiritual can be brought down to comprehension and made at least partially intelligible in mutual converse. Language indeed is and must always be inadequate to express the fullness of thought, but it is most inadequate when it endeavours to make the letter the mirror of the unseen and eternal. It is here that metaphor in the usage and expression of prophecy comes to its own. The inability of the letter to transcribe in literal form the spiritual vision or doctrine is admitted; metaphor and parable alone are left to set forth the things of the spirit, to expound

the divine counsels, and to portray the future destinies of man. The imagination, chastened and controlled by the spirit of God, remains as it were master of the field. The means and methods of exposition thus at the constant service of the prophets and their successors find their continued and perfected employment in the New Testament Revelation of St. John.

This preoccupation with the unseen and eternal and with its application to the interests and duties of the present life did not of course imply in the consciousness of the prophets any unreality or detachment from the present. If the question had been propounded to them and its implications explained, to make choice or definition of the material and tangible or the spiritual and invisible as the true real, without doubt like the Indian seers they would have claimed for the latter the highest and only reality. Their motive in the free use of metaphor was not to confuse or disguise truth, but so to present it as to bring it home to the understanding and consciousness of their hearers. Every metaphor therefore, even the most abstruse and apparently far-fetched, had and has its counterpart in experience. Each dream or vision, however distant or bizarre it might appear to be, is put together of elements supplied by and through the bodily senses, a mosaic compact of the experiences of the past, stored up and recombined in the free working of the mind. The imagination paints its pictures from materials ready to hand, it does not invent *ex nihilo*. And the difference perhaps between the working imagination of the Hebrew prophet and the dulled imagery which the 'man in the street' frames for himself is that the

former is so intensely and entirely preoccupied with the unseen that the external forms and interactions of physical life hold a very secondary place ; and to him as to all the thinkers and writers of the Old Testament vision and metaphor are to be trusted as the product indeed of a far-flung imagination and thought, which have successfully ventured on a not unfruitful quest for truth, reality, and duty.

CHAPTER VI

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND NATURE

It will not be disputed that the writers of the Old Testament were in close touch with nature, as we understand it, observant of the natural world around them, narrow as that world may seem to be compared with the naturalist's observation and knowledge in our own day. The winds and the waters, the changing seasons and the distribution of the rains were all of interest to them, and these things were noted with a fidelity and care that are not altogether or merely explained by the effect they exercised on their daily lives. Apart from writers like Amos, whose business it may be said was to know at least one aspect of the countryside, and from others who as chronologists or historians found their subjects in the traditions and events of the past as they affected the human race and their own nation in particular, it is almost surprising how the minds of the authors and their records are charged with sympathy and insight into nature in her various forms and moods. It is true of course that they draw many of their illustrations from the crafts of men, the potter and the designer, the steward and the architect; even these disclose a considerable knowledge of natural forces and material as utilised and

controlled by the hand of man. A far larger proportion of the parables and similes and allusions contained in their various writings are inspired by the ways and life of the countryside in their changing aspect and conditions. It is perhaps not easy to understand this or to sympathize with its aptness and beauty until it is realised that Palestine in the lifetime of the Old Testament authors was a land flowing with milk and honey, of rich fertility and constant interest, and continued to be so more or less until desolated by the hand of the invader, and perhaps also by climatic causes reduced to the comparative barrenness and drought that have been its portion for centuries even to our own times. Released from oppression and religious intolerance its partial restoration is already accomplished, and the descendants of its ancient overlords are proving that their hand has not altogether forgotten its cunning in making the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

In the earlier and central books the imagery and illustrations are of the most natural description: fruits and flowers, the trees of the field, the ways of the wild beasts and birds, the laying-out of the farm-land and the development and growth of the crops. It is evident that behind these records there lay no inconsiderable experience and habit of observation and thought. The riddle of Samson of the honeycomb in the carcass of the lion was not propounded by an uninstructed town dweller, nor the heavy wagon pounding the suffering ground beneath its grinding weight a simile that would have suggested itself in the narrow dusty lanes of an Eastern city. The intimate and life-like description of the burrowing processes of the underground miner in the later part of the book of

Job was not detailed at second hand without direct personal knowledge and experience; and whoever it may have been that set forth the story of Jonah and the storm at sea knew the thought and ways of sailors, the commerce of the distant port, and something at least of the strange plants and peoples of far-off lands. It is an old but no doubt mistaken idea that conceives of the people of Israel as shut up within the narrow bounds of their promised land with no cognisance of or interests in the great beyond. Even then they were true ancestors in the best sense of the wandering Jew, and some of them at least had minds receptive of knowledge of the wide world and of the manners and ways of the non-Jewish peoples who dwelt therein. Most however if not all of the more formal parables of the Old Testament are inspired directly by the sights and sounds of the Palestinian country-side. It has often been noted as strange that there are practically no illustrations or similes drawn from the life of the towns; and yet in the days of the dual kingdom and earlier the capital cities at least were the centres of no mean civic activities and thought. The well-known parables are all parables of country life. The rich owner with his great flocks laying selfish and violent hands on the one ewe-lamb of the down-trodden serf; the vineyard and the grapes, the vintage with its rewards and disappointments, the ripening bunches, and the toil and merry-making of the vintagers,—these are the theme of many utterances of encouragement or warning. Even Ezekiel in exile draws his illustrations in large part from the country and wayside, perhaps from recollections of his youth: the boiling pot, the eagles and the vine, and many another.

And the warning conveyed by the Israelite king to his presumptuous rival in the south was couched in the simple and striking simile of the thistle of Lebanon aspiring to wed the daughter of the cedar, and crushed by the heedless foot of the passing wild beast. So deservedly should Amaziah and his kingdom fall, if his overweening pride led him to destruction.

It is only in the later books and by later writers that the natural is to a considerable extent deserted for the supernatural. The authors sought their imagery in pictures or ideals of a world above and beyond, and allowed their imagination free play in a region of superhuman prerogatives and powers. This was indeed in harmony with the general movement of prophetic thought to an ideal future of recompense and reward for the disasters and suffering of this life. Apocalyptic conceptions and hopes gave the colour as was natural and formed the basis of the illustrations and significant visions with which the later prophets illuminated their discourse. And it would not be altogether beside the mark to find in the character and material of their similes a criterion of earlier or later dates for some at least of the writings whose chronological place in the series of Old Testament documents is doubtful or undetermined. Such imagery and the similes of later times appear to us not seldom of an exaggerated and even grotesque nature, scenes and pictures in which superhuman beings move and superhuman phenomena are displayed. But these would not be the less convincing on that account to readers or an audience more or less familiar with these conceptions and to a generation probably more nervous and highly-strung than their predecessors, whose

experience of the frustration of cherished hopes and the overthrow of national plans and purposes had led them to look forward to a future of spiritual exaltation, which should redress the heavily-weighted balance of a dark and disastrous present. It was easy in picture and parable to kindle a light of hope for which the nation's depressed conditions and outlook gave in themselves little immediate opportunity.

It is not irrelevant also to compare the setting as it were of the Old Testament prophecies in this framework of the love for and knowledge of nature with the sacred writings of other lands, which have been preserved and are revered by non-Christian or Jewish peoples. Apart altogether from the contrast of their theology and the difference of theme, in which last respect the Psalms alone perhaps would enter into direct comparison, the Old Testament Scriptures are as a whole more stately and dignified than the Rig-Vedic hymns with their philosophy of the universe and thinly disguised nature gods. The environment in Palestine of the nation and their seers was not altogether unlike, if the ordinarily accepted theory of the descent of the Aryans into the Panjab is correct. Both in spirit and in form however the Hebrew psalms and prophecies are more closely akin to the Babylonian hymns of praise and prayer, if these could be purged of their polytheism and the grotesque and monstrous forms of warring gods and demons, figures on the borderland of the human and the animal creation. Undoubtedly the near relationship of Jewish and Babylonian literature is a strong argument in favour of the kinship of the peoples, not to be explained away by their unhappy intercourse in Palestine or the later

experience as exiles or settlers in the homeland of the Babylonian kings. They are more natural and reasonable also in their purpose and ideal than the somewhat sombre and impracticable system of Confucian ethics, which are more political as it would seem in their aim than simply moral, out of touch with human affairs or sympathy with the needs and frailties of commonplace humanity. The teaching of the Hebrew prophets again is altogether more brotherly and practical, more helpful and sympathetic than the stern and lonely doctrine of the Buddha, at least as interpreted in Ceylon and by the followers of the Hīnayāna school in general—a stern and unhelpful doctrine, for each man must work out his own salvation without aid from another, for this indeed no man is competent to render. Very different is the teaching of the Northern School or Mahāyāna which its adherents claim was delivered by Gautama Buddha in the last long otherwise silent years of his life, when he had meditated anew on the mysteries of life and had found a better way to the truth and the longed-for release from change and sorrow. In the forefront of the Mahāyāna system is the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, a rescue moreover from this evil world and from sin which man cannot achieve by his own unaided efforts, but in the strife for which there are countless multitudes of celestial beings, eager and able effectively to help him and to ensure that he shall not succumb to the forces of darkness but shall attain to the everlasting kingdom. Their assistance never fails and is never frustrated ; if only there is genuine faith on the part of man. It is evident that apart from its polytheism this teaching is so similar to that of the Christian

that many thinkers and writers have conjectured an early and close relationship between them. This may be so. The conclusion however is doubtful, for some forms of early Indian faith shew similar features to those of the Mahāyānist creed and practice, and these were undoubtedly known and taught before the rise and extension of Christianity.

It would not be erroneous or misleading therefore to claim that in their love for and intimate touch with nature the Hebrew poets and writers yield place of honour only to the Greek. It should not be forgotten that the prophets of the Old Testament were also poets like all Oriental teachers and preachers of early date. It was only in the musings and compositions of some of the later writers that poetry now and again fell back on prose. The touch and the love however that the Hebrew and the Greek felt and expressed were subtly and perpetually different. It is not easy perhaps to assess or define the distinct character of each, but it can always be felt. In part at least it may be explained from the joyous exultant aspect of Greek life, its consciousness of power, whereby the buoyant Greek could take his nature with jest and laughter, and even when suffering under the unrestrained march of fate could see in it in general the workings of a will that devised and purposed good. The Jew was more in earnest in accepting his responsibility to the Higher Power that was above nature, its creator and its lord ; and to him in the desert or in Palestine existence presented itself so often in the light of a life and death struggle in grim earnest with forces wielded by that Higher Power, of which he only dimly comprehended the meaning and the control. For him as for the birds and beasts the

key-note and intention of his relation to the Unseen was obedience ; to the Greek it was communion. Could either have been transplanted into the place and circumstances of the other, the environment would have seemed strange, and its moods and presuppositions more or less rude and unintelligible. To both Hebrew and Greek nature was lovable and loved, not 'tooth and claw,' but a kindly teacher and a constant friend. Perhaps however the Greek way was the best. It is at least more in harmony with our own thought, and as truly interpretative of the natural world in all its compass as we conceive it. The essential difference therefore is of kind not of degree.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ART

It is often, perhaps generally assumed that the Jews of the early years had little or no appreciation of artistic excellence and beauty ; and that among their natural gifts or attributes a high regard for or understanding of form or tone or colouring had no place. The answer to the charge, if a reply is required, is perhaps twofold : that appreciation of these things is to a large extent a matter of education and opportunity, and that peoples or individuals admittedly endowed with high artistic tastes differ widely in their estimates of beauty and worth ; and further that as regards the Hebrews the judgement above recorded is not justified. As far as nature is concerned and a close and interested attention to natural phenomena and life the Hebrew writers are far from displaying indifference ; and in regard to art also in general or the varied kinds of art the accusation made has little foundation in fact. It would not moreover be unfair in estimating the difference which time and circumstances and training effect to recall as an illustration how little recognition among ourselves was to be found not very long ago of the charm of mountain or ice-scenery. The trained eye and thought of our own day regards with high

admiration landscapes and scenes which almost within living memory were set down as dismal and repellent. So surely in the widest sense the trained and accustomed eye or touch is needed to discern the full beauty of a picture or the perfection of form or structure of the bird or beast or insect. The 'unlearned and ignorant' man, ἰδιώτης, can only stand before the painting or sculpture and admire or declare his dislike. The real artist sees illimitable virtues or unforgiveable faults. It would be rightly maintained that the former may be possessed of no less natural abilities than the latter; they have not however been afforded opportunities of development. The artistic talents and capacities of the ancient Greeks will not be disputed. If however the evidence of their literature is to be accepted as sufficient they found little or no pleasure in the rich colouring of the world of nature, and noted or failed to note its changeful gradations with an unseeing eye; colouring which under an Eastern sky has so deeply impressed the Indian or the Japanese. So neither is the Jew of olden times to be condemned offhand as rude and unartistic if in some respects at least he does not seem to have felt the power or influence of those external objects and scenes which the verdict of modern thought declares most admirable, or to have been expert in those arts which to us make all the difference between an existence that is dull grimy and self-absorbed and a life of high competence and achievement. It will not be disputed further that with regard to architecture at least and the erection of stately buildings the proficiency and skill of the Jewish builders and artists were of a high order. The trained

mind and imagination of the architect again are required duly to appreciate what the ordinary reader passes by with little understanding. But assuredly the palaces and temples of Solomon and Herod were no mean buildings. Perhaps there was little knowledge and little opportunity for the exercise of the art before the era of the Monarchy with its truce to strife and its comparatively settled government. Those however who have studied the details and construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness are agreed that the directions given for its final and stable erection show a considerable knowledge of materials and of artistic skill in their adaptation and combinations. If Moses was learned in all the science and art of the Egyptians this would include a knowledge of architecture and familiarity with the works of great builders. Of the less important buildings of Jerusalem or other cities however in which architectural ability and insight would be expected little is or can be known. The palaces of the great men no doubt were worthy of their position and wealth. On the other hand the analogy either of the East or West, in feudal Europe or the contrasted affluence and poverty of the Orient, would suggest that the homes of the ordinary town-dweller or labourer in the country were poor and plain, huddled together in mean streets or hastily-erected shelters from the stress of storm or heat. Such was certainly the case for instance in republican Athens or early Rome. A nearer parallel may perhaps be found in the great cities of Mesopotamia, Persia, or Egypt. The ruined walls and pillars of temple and royal palace, of castle and nobleman's dwelling-house, testify to their magnificence and the skill and care that were lavished

upon them. It is reasonable to suppose that the same or similar conditions determined the course and manner of life in Jerusalem and in the towns and villages of Palestine; and the literary evidence of the Old Testament and later Jewish writers is substantiated by the archaeological testimony of foundation walls and chambers. It is only in the drier climate of Egypt or Mesopotamia or Central Asia that more perishable materials may be preserved. The undistinguished citizen raised for himself and his family a shelter or built a house as he could, not as he would. The temples of the God of heaven, the homes also of the kings and the nobility were the creation of the master-minds of true artists and thinkers, and would not compare unfavourably or be subject of disdain if they could be re-erected in the streets or squares of a modern city. They would lose their setting, and so far would shrink in majesty and effect, but to the grace and strength of their construction the universal approval of the judges of these things would be accorded.

It is maintained however, and must no doubt be conceded that with regard to painting and the allied arts the knowledge and practice of the ancient Hebrews were entirely defective. No Jewish miniatures for example of an early date have been preserved comparable to those of Persian or Indian origin. There are no rock sculptures or drawings from Palestine set out with colours in a natural harmony to which the Occident has never attained, as for instance in the Ajanta caves of India or the tombs of Egypt. And even the later illumination of manuscripts by Hebrew scribes, which of course affords no criterion of or real appreciation of colour in an earlier age, is stiff and

monotonous compared with the rich variety of colouring and effect in Persian and Indian copies of the Qurān. This also was developed many centuries later than the prophetic era. There is little or no evidence of a consciousness of the beauty of colour and contrast that makes so strong an appeal to the thought and seeing eye in our own day, and there is no reference to these things in the Old Testament. It is like the defect of colour discrimination in Homer and other early poets. The sunrise and sunset and the rainbow in the sky were celebrated for their majesty and as signs of divine power and good-will, not for the colouring which made them no less beautiful than grand. This should not be accepted as indicating want of capacity; the appreciation had not been called forth, or the latent thought emerged into consciousness and found expression. It has often been remarked that the same latent ability appears to be true of the early Greeks, and this is perhaps the true interpretation of the evidence of the Homeric and other poems.

In music and poetry on the other hand the Jews of olden times were highly proficient. Both these arts were primarily enrolled in the service of religion and worship; and the religious poetry of the Hebrews is without a rival in any age or among any nation. Its nearest relations of olden time are familiar to us in the Babylonian Psalms of Penitence and Lament; less familiar, but perhaps more closely akin in spirit are the Buddhist Hymns and Prayers. There is moreover in the Old Testament much poetry other than and outside of the three books which are officially recognised as poetic, Psalms, Proverbs and Job. These are written in Hebraic measure which is not guided

by the laws which condition the lines and stanzas of classical or European poetry. Its type is Oriental, determined apparently entirely by the variety and number of the stresses, elastic and variable to a degree unknown and impossible to the more rigid types of the West. Perhaps the nearest home parallel that could be quoted is the ancient alliterative poetry of the Anglo-Saxon writers. In the Hebrew there is both alliteration and rhyme, employed however on a confined and irregular scale and differing entirely in its practice from the usages and laws of Indo-European languages, ancient or modern. It is this freedom and difference which have created so much difficulty in the elaboration of the laws or rules under which Hebrew poetry expresses itself; and even now there is no general or acknowledged agreement except on the broadest lines. Apart from the narrative portions almost the whole of the later Prophets is written in poetry. To a great extent also these prophecies were no doubt originally declaimed after the manner of the East, before they were committed to writing, with a rhythm and force that frequently must have held the audience spellbound. It is in part failure to realise these conditions and want of sympathy with the speakers or people themselves that have led so often to fruitless and unnecessary emendations of the Hebrew text. In most perhaps all of the canonical books poetical passages are found more or less frequently; and the boundary or limiting line between poetry and prose in the early Hebrew as in most Oriental literature is narrow and without precision. It would not be difficult to formulate a definition of Hebrew poetry which would include almost the whole

of the Old Testament. The formula however would hardly admit of effective defence or justification. That it should appear possible illustrates the very close kinship of poetry and prose in the East.

In regard to ancient Hebrew music it must be acknowledged that little or nothing definite is really known. This also found its motive and centre in the Temple service and worship, and with the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem its source and inspiration were cut off. It is not probable that the music of the synagogue reproduces or perpetuates in any way the melodies of the ancient sanctuary. There are traditional phrases or melodies for instance for the recitation of the Scriptures, but of the origin of these no reliable account seems to be forthcoming, and it is not likely that they date back many centuries. The full and familiar music of the Temple ritual is certified in the Hebrew text by the constant reference to instruments of music, to musicians and singers, and to others in charge of the conduct of the musical service. It would appear that many of the Psalms were composed especially for the Temple, and were sung antiphonally or otherwise at or in preparation for the services. The country or village shrines also, where they existed, would have their corresponding services and choirs. In some instances at least the bands of the priests or prophets practised song in procession or dance. The instruments themselves appear to have been predominantly wind, with cymbals and drum ; and the effects therefore to a Western ear might well have appeared noisy and strained, like the Indian tomtoms. Knowledge however of the real tone and manner of combination is entirely lost, and only conjecture or analogy

can suggest or inspire an attempt to reproduce the character of the music.

It remains to be added that the influence of biblical narrative and story and of the circumstances and environment of Hebrew life were supreme in early and mediæval Christian art. The Greek influence, which moved so strongly eastwards and dominated Buddhist iconography found little or no place in Christian artistic work whether pictorial or sculptured. Painting and imagery, as for example in the catacombs, derive their subjects from biblical sources; and the same popular themes of Noah and the Ark, Jonah and the great fish, Moses and the rock, together with others of similar nature are constantly repeated. The illustrations to biblical manuscripts are naturally inspired by the same motive. And it is curious that as in many Egyptian and Coptic manuscripts, so sometimes in later illuminated and illustrated texts of the Old and New Testament, the illustrations occupy a more important place than the text itself. The tendency in this direction is perhaps in part due to the general illiteracy of those to whose interest and attention the Scriptures were to be commended; that they might learn through the eye, if other avenues of approach were unopened. The great painters of the Middle Ages also in the decoration of the altars and Churches turned for inspiration to the Bible, but not seldom also to Apocryphal books. The stateliness of ecclesiastical music and psalmody endeavoured in part at least to reproduce what were believed to be the characteristic features of the Temple service. And drama also in the Middle Ages, perhaps with the same purpose of familiarising through the eye the narratives

and truths of Scripture, was reclaimed to the service of the Church. It is not always easy to realise how large a part the religious drama played in the ordinary town and village life, where occupations were few, amusements yet more rare, and books often non-existent even if they could have read. The only instance of these religious plays surviving to our own times is that of Oberammergau. Testimony has often been borne by visitors to the little Alpine village to its moderating and impressive effect.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEBREW PROPHETS AND RELIGION

It would not be an unfair or partial statement of the facts to maintain that throughout the whole course of Israelite history from Moses or Elijah to Malachi the prophets deliver one and the same message. Their doctrine or religious teaching is in its essence unchanged; and they enforce principles which are fundamentally constant, and affirm beliefs and urge the consequent obligations which, from the beginning to the end of the long prophetic succession, are based upon the same fixed and primary truths which they find in the nature of God and in His relations to Israel. There is present of course development and expansion, broader views and a more steady and comprehensive outlook. It could hardly be otherwise in the course of centuries of living experience and history. But the fundamental elements of faith and teaching persist, and are the groundwork alike of exhortation, denunciation, and praise. Their firm convictions and attitude are indeed in striking contrast to the wavering beliefs and irregular allegiance, to the superstitious practices and borrowed cults of kings and people alike, who, in the records which have come down to us of their misdoings and misbeliefs, seem to have been the most

greedily absorptive of all mankind of strange and foreign cults and customs, however iniquitous they might seem to be. It is perhaps fair to remember that the picture of their ill doing is painted for us by those who would not be likely to take an easy or tolerant view of departures from whole-hearted faith and service of Jehovah. These side-views or glimpses of a people's faith that has run to seed, and whose religious practice has contaminated itself with everything that the surrounding nations could contribute of error and folly, are of much interest as illustrative of creed and cult, an amalgam of the most discordant tendencies and elements. To the prophets, as to any sane view of morality and right, it was all abomination, a defiance and offence to the living God. Whole-heartedly they denounce it all. They do not however of course confine themselves to denunciation and denial. They have a positive and definite creed, which is Israel's true religion, asserted and revealed by God Himself, which can make no compromise with the idolatrous practices of the heathen, and is steadfastly opposed to all contrary doctrine or degrading and dishonourable observance or religious belief. Whether they are ascetics as Elijah, statesmen and politicians as Isaiah, countrymen as Amos, pastors and teachers as Jeremiah or Ezekiel—all are in varying degree teachers and expositors of divine truth—it is essentially one and the same religious doctrine which they enforce, the same religious principles which they urge upon their hearers or readers from different points of view and according to their several insight and character.

The primary and foundation principle of the prophetic teaching from the earliest to the latest

period was that Jehovah was one God, unique and supreme. Beside Him there was not and could not be any other, competitive in rank or nature. He alone is God and there is none else ; Creator and Lord of the whole universe, to whom all owe their being and every good. That Israel is His peculiar people, chosen and recognised by Him and distinguished from other peoples, is as it were an accident of history, eventuating to the supreme well-being of Israel, not an essential element of His character or a controlling limit of His power. The question may fairly be raised how far at one time or another by the ordinary Israelite his God was conceived of merely in a national sense, the god of Israel, but with no dominion over or regard for other nations ; one therefore of a crowd, as Moab had his god, and the peoples of Canaan each their national deity, their peculiar and private possession. It is probable that to a considerable extent, in the earlier periods of their history at least, in the wanderings in the desert and in the sojourn in Egypt and during the troubled times of the settlement in Palestine, the prevalent conception of Jehovah was not other than that of a merely national god, neither more nor less real than any one of the gods of the nations round about, one of many, their God but not the god of another tribe or people. It was a thought of Jehovah which endeavoured to appropriate him individually and nationally, and to set aside all other possible claims on his attention and care ; it was not a conscious or intentional derogation from his greatness and power. By the prophets however He was never so envisaged. The stated limits of his jurisdiction and rule were never less than the whole earth ; nor had other gods any reality or

place as competing or co-existing national deities, within whose territories as it were his writ did not run. This doctrine therefore lay at the heart of all true Israelite religion and teaching. It may well be that by earlier prophets as Elijah or Amos all the implications of this belief were not realised. Their view was naturally contained within their own country and the lands and peoples that were in nearest touch with Israel. With the opening up of the great world and the appearance of new peoples a riper understanding and further interpretations of the old-established truth were gained, and Jehovah's claims to unique and universal sovereignty were set upon a firmer and wider basis. Both in its inception and development however the doctrine was a true monotheism, the clearest and most tenaciously maintained that the world has known. Muhammadism and Christianity alone have entered into rivalry in this respect. Throughout its long history, from exilic times at least, Judaism has been faithful to the primary and persistent teaching of her great prophets.

This central conception with regard to the divine being and nature involved necessarily and implied teaching concerning the character and attributes of Jehovah. The Lord, who was one, was proclaimed as unique not only in rank and sovereignty, but as pre-eminently possessed of characteristics which belonged or in supreme perfection belonged to him alone. Of these the chief were holiness and power. The latter had been manifest in the creation of the world, and was exhibited daily in the governance and control of men and all creatures upon the face of the earth. Nothing occurred or could occur apart from the

dominating will and supreme unchallengeable power of God. Such a control might well develop into a theory of determinism, and debar all human initiative and self-direction. And there are traces no doubt of such a belief, enforced and active in the Old Testament. It does not seem however to have laid hold of the prophets. In their teaching, while God is controller and arbiter of all, whose might is as irresistible as his right is beyond contradiction or dispute, man individually or the nation as a whole is always free to accept or reject the conditions of the divine sovereignty as declared in his precepts and judgements. Probably the difficulty, as it presents itself to many minds, of reconciling the supreme and absolute power of God with the free-will of man did not suggest itself to them. They would have repudiated equally any derogation from the supreme majesty and might of Jehovah and any limitation or minimising of the responsibility and guilt of man when he chooses the evil and eschews the good. Man is responsible for his rejection of the laws which he ought to obey, and for failure to perform duties and to respond to claims which are rightly incumbent upon him ; and God holds absolute dominion over all. These are constant and unchanging themes upon which the prophets insist.

The second great attribute of the Divine Being, as the prophets conceive of Him, is holiness. It is often said that this property in the Old Testament is not moral, at least in the sense in which it is accepted in modern belief and teaching ; and the great vision of Isaiah in the temple is cited in support or proof of this interpretation. There is probably truth in the contention, at least for the earlier periods of Israel's

religious life and thought. The term 'moral' itself however is of such variable content, differing in meaning for each individual and yet more for each church or nation or race, that it would be better to dissociate it from the immediate thought or conception of the prophets. In Isaiah's vision it is clear that the first connotation of the divine holiness, as it is proclaimed by the seraphim, is that of unapproachability. Isaiah until purified by the touch of the live coal from the altar does not venture to turn towards the Lord of the temple thus manifested, and is conscious of qualities in himself and in his people which forbid his near approach. In other words the essential conception of holiness is formal or ritual not ethical. This is sufficiently familiar in other religions, which like the reverence that surrounds the king universally regard the divine holiness as protective, assuring that unclean or unworthy objects or men shall be kept at a distance. It seems probable that this was the initial conception in Israel, and that it persisted through a considerable part at least of Israelite history. There was however constant doctrinal development, which followed on experience and meditation. And the final result in later prophetic and Jewish thought and exposition was the formulation of a doctrine and definition little if at all inferior ethically to the best that was reached in other forms of religious creed or faith.

Further the prophets had continually in mind and enforced with all the consequences and lessons which it involved the doctrine that between Jehovah and his people there existed a mutual covenant with all its implied benefits and obligations. This had indeed

been divinely initiated, but had been freely entered into by Israel who had thereby accepted its privileges and placed themselves under bond to its conditions. Jehovah had not so entered into covenant with any other people, neither did He regard any other people with the same complaisance and goodwill. On the divine side therefore the covenant implied protection and guidance, deliverance from their foes and immunity from oppression and wrong, as in the great and constantly cited deliverance from Egypt, from Pharaoh and all his host at the Red Sea. On the side of Israel it registered a demand for obedience to the law and commandments of God, subjection to His control both in their national and individual life, and a faithful observance of His precepts. A similar conformity and obedience were not demanded or expected of any other people ; they did not ' know the Lord,' and in their ignorance were unable to follow him, or to subject themselves to righteous commandments and laws which had not been set before them. The God of Israel was in truth the God of the whole earth, but Israel was in a unique and peculiar relationship to Him. It is upon this that the prophets so constantly insist, some of them with much vehemence, and always with a deep conviction of the disastrous consequences to Israel of their violation of the covenant. Jehovah had promised to them protection and mercy, immunity from ill and deliverance from their enemies round about. The promise however was conditional, as all covenants are necessarily mutual and conditional. If they violated their obligations under the covenant, and took no heed of the duties or manner of life incumbent upon them, they had no right to expect on

the divine side fulfilment of His free and gracious word. When they wilfully and voluntarily broke the covenant it was thereby dissolved in both parts. This was the answer that the Jews received when some of them appear to have urged that they were entitled to protection and the exact and literal fulfilment of the divine promise to them, whatever action they took or whatever the failure and falsity of their lives. The prophets contended on the other hand that if they were heedless and disobedient, neglected the worship of Jehovah and served other gods, they had no right to expect that He would satisfy their wishes or meet claims which otherwise would have been valid. The covenant is not and cannot be one-sided only ; it is dissolved in all its extent by their violation of its obligations and conditions ; and the divine anger is justly hot against their disobedience and presumption and folly. Such is the constant indictment which the prophets present to the people. And they urge that the only way of recovery is by a whole-hearted and sincere return to righteous dealing and obedience, taking upon themselves once more the yoke of the covenant in every duty and degree. Then will God who is gracious and merciful not exact the full penalty for their transgression, but will forgive their sin and restore to them the light of His countenance. Otherwise downfall and disaster are certain and imminent ; and the more wilful and complete the disobedience, the more constant and far-reaching the violation of righteous precept and command, the more hopeless and irretrievable would be the overthrow and punishment in which the guilty nation by its own determining choice would find itself involved.

These two doctrines with all their suggestive implications and consequences were the main elements of prophetic teaching throughout the whole course of Israelite history. They were regarded no doubt from different points of view according to the varying conditions of the times and the character and insight of the prophet. In particular the reciprocity of the covenant between Jehovah and his people, and the duties and obligations to which the latter were thereby subject were more clearly seen, and the Israelites were more definitely warned that rights and privileges under the covenant were not and could not be unconditional and unaccompanied by the corresponding obligations laid upon them, which they had voluntarily assumed in entering into the covenant. These obligations were essentially obedience, service, and love. When Israel disallowed and denied them all, the covenant rule was thereby broken, and the penalty was inevitable and sure. In the central doctrine however of the uniqueness and supremacy of Jehovah there was not the same room and opportunity for development or a changing appreciation. The prophets were monotheists from the beginning, the earlier no less than the latest, and from that point of view there was nothing more to be added. It was the enlargement and confirmation only of the doctrine that were assumed as it were with widened experience and a fuller knowledge of human and national life among the encompassing peoples. As each new tribe or nation came within prophetic ken the overlordship of Jehovah received a new and fuller interpretation and a greater circle of subjects was comprised within his domain. None of these indeed had been independent

before of his control or beyond his sway; they had merely been unknown by name to prophetic thought in the great region beyond to which most of the prophets at least gave little heed. The title ' God of the whole earth ' became more suggestive and real as the earth unfolded its stores of peoples and nations and languages and tongues. The one and only God was the doctrine preached from the beginning; there neither was nor could be on the part of the prophets, whatever the children of Israel might practise or believe, any deviation from this. All that it implied however was more clearly conceived and more aptly and definitely set forth. And thereby the dignity and lordship of Jehovah received continual enhancement and an ever enlarged and expanding interpretation.

CHAPTER IX

PERMANENT VALUE OF PROPHETIC TEACHING AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD'S IDEAL AND GOAL

No one will question that the world would have been the poorer, intellectually as well as morally, without the contribution to faith and order which the Hebrew prophets have made. Historically their importance and influence have been great ; doctrinally they have set forth truth in a firm framework of faith in God and belief in His beneficent and presiding oversight of all things. To represent their teaching merely as the foundation for legal development in Israel is an entire misapprehension chronologically no less than on higher spiritual grounds. For centuries the two issues or tendencies pursued a parallel but not wholly independent course, but if either of them took precedence in time this earlier place and office belonged in Israel to the law. In the later Israelite and Jewish history the divergence became accentuated, and it would not be incorrect to write of two schools, legal and prophetic, who specialised in the rules of law and ritual on the one hand, or on the other in the spiritual teaching which they had learned from the prophets interpreted and expanded in the broader

light and according to the convictions and tendencies of their own day. These schools appear ultimately to have become entirely dissociated from one another, and in place of the closely related and interdependent paths, wherein their earlier course had been pursued, to have followed independent lines of development to the detriment perhaps of both. The vitality of the law was obscured or lost in legalism, ritual, the minutiae of criticism and interpretation, or the framing of maxims and rules which should meet every possible need or experience of contemporary life and manners. The essential freedom and vitality of prophetic teaching on the contrary were preserved. Irregular products or branches it is true found themselves involved in speculation with regard to the future, allowing free rein to their imagination, foretelling or guessing at what the future might desirably bring, and these forecasts or anticipations gave rise to the so-called apocalyptic literature with its hopes and visions. Withal however the essential elements of prophetic teaching were never abandoned or lost, and these later developments, unregulated and speculative as they might appear to be, were yet based upon the beliefs and principles which the earlier prophets had once and for all declared.

These main principles, which formed the basis of all prophetic belief and teaching and remained unshaken and unchanged through all prophetic history, consisted as has been seen in a strong and intense monotheism, faith in one only God, eternal and supreme throughout the universe which He has created; and further in the assurance of a covenant relation between God and his people Israel, whom He had chosen to be

his peculiar people, by virtue of which choice all Israelites were sons of God and heirs to all the promises of good which He had made to them and to their fathers. With the knowledge and preconceptions of our own day it is probable that a monotheistic creed would be both understood and formulated in somewhat different terms from those used and implied by the prophets. It appears a less simple doctrine, difficult in its implications both philosophical and religious, but no less inevitable and the ultimate explanation of the universe as we know and find it to be; and an adequate definition of God so conceived which to them appeared easy altogether eludes us. That the world however would have been historically and religiously not only different but weakened without the Jewish witness to this truth as it was framed and expressed by the prophets hardly admits of dispute. That witness has been singularly firm and stable in the face of persecution, calumny, and neglect; and its significance has been the greater in that, unlike some other creeds that bear the name, it has been carried by its adherents enthusiastically and convincedly far and wide among the nations. That the Jews have ever been a 'dispersion' among the Gentiles has strengthened and enlarged their witness to a faith patiently and consistently maintained. In this respect the religious world, and indeed the world as a whole, owes to the Jew a debt which has been insufficiently recognised and never adequately discharged. This faith in the living God was both in doctrine and practice the foundation and inspiration of the prophets' life and work.

Difficulties are raised in our own time in regard to

this doctrine and teaching of the prophets which are far from being merely difficulties of definition, but which affect the core and essence of the Christian faith. Some one has said that to define God is the most difficult problem that is set to the theologian. It might be put more strongly, that to human thought and within the capacity of human language an adequate definition is impossible. Approximately only and from one aspect or another what men believe with regard to the one God may be set down in words or explained in theological phraseology. To the early Hebrew prophets however it appeared to be an easy matter to define the being and nature of the God whom they preached. Probably rather they did not feel the need of definition. To the thought and with the presuppositions of our own age serious exception is taken to any and every definition that may be offered; the truth being of course that the one and only God, the supreme Mind that orders all and the Will that controls, is above and beyond the defining power or expression of the human mind. Within recent times Christian thought has drifted away from the prophetic position, and it does not seem probable that it will return absolutely and literally to it. The idea of a *static* God as the phrase has been used, aloof from the universe which he controls with invincible strength and indeflexible will and in whose hands man is a mere puppet, seems now no less inconceivable than derogatory to both God and man. On the other hand the conception of an immanent God appears to lead to all the perils and incongruities of pantheism. There is therefore a return to the acknowledged impossibility of definition,

together with a growing consent that apart from a supreme directing Mind the universe of intricate form and order as we are learning to know it is incapable of explanation either in its origin or continuance. Renewed difficulty is raised by the popular theory of evolution. If this theory is of universal application it would yet appear necessary to exclude God, at least in any sense that would have been intelligible to the Hebrew prophets or to any Christian thinker or theologian of early or later times. An 'evolving' God, formulated and apparently believed in by some writers, is a freak of fancy, or of theory driven to extremes. It is man's conception of God that 'evolves,' broadens out and becomes more true to the reality, more apprehending of that which ultimately is and must be beyond complete apprehension. Whatever the relation between the human and the divine mind, or in whatever way we express our conviction that the former is in some sense occupied and held by the divine, which is yet not measured by it but is infinitely above, the Hebrew prophets laid a secure foundation of faith and doctrine, which has not been shaken or superseded. The edifice that has been raised upon it is wider and greater far than these early teachers and preachers could have foreseen or imagined. But the thinkers and theologians of the Christian Church and the world at large owe a great debt to those who consistently maintained and taught these abiding truths concerning God and the principles of His universal rule.

The second element of the prophetic creed and teaching, the covenant relation between Jehovah and his people, it is not so easy to interpret in terms of

modern value whether ethical or religious. That it was and has been of inestimable worth to the Jewish race there can be no question. To the Jew of the prophet's age and later it was this conviction of a special bond between himself and his God, of a divine regard for the people of Israel which was shared by no other nation, which sustained him through all tribulation and defeat; this also, as it was misinterpreted and made the basis of an overweening presumption and trespass, formed a chief theme of the prophet's indictment against his fellow countrymen. They failed to realise that special privileges involved special duties and obligations, and that in default of the fulfilment of these the terms of the covenant were invalidated and its promises and privileges could no longer be claimed. This conviction however of a covenant God has been a main element through the centuries that has given strength and tenacity to the national bond between Jews in distant lands and living under the most diverse conditions. To this national consciousness and cohesion there has been no historical parallel. It has been a unique feature in the life of the world, exercising not always directly a unique influence. The Jew has ever commanded the sympathy and support of his fellow Jew, however divergent their outlook and circumstances may have been in other respects. Within more recent times the assertion would probably be justified that the bond has been weakened and undermined to a considerable extent, but its real strength and significance have received abundant proof within modern experience. Zionism, whatever its avowed creed or determination, is essentially an expression of this national sympathy and

conviction ; and it is always this outward and tangible form as it were which has presented itself most prominently to the outsider and has most deeply impressed the non-Jewish world. To the Jew himself however at least of the later centuries following the overthrow of the Davidic kingdom and even in the dark Middle Ages it was the divine side that made the strongest appeal. His life and fortunes were under divine favour and protection, a favour not accorded to the Gentiles, whom therefore it was lawful to overreach and exploit to the utmost of his power. There can be little doubt that it was this belief perverted and misused which led to the development of the least pleasing features of Jewish life and character. It was a truer insight however that rightly accorded to the divine aspect of the covenant relationship the greater significance and importance. It is here that the permanent meaning and lesson of the covenant must be sought.

In a further sense Israel of old missed the significance of her prophets' teaching ; perhaps it would be more correct to assert that the Jewish nation contemporary with the prophets missed altogether the true significance of the covenant itself. It was a vital failure of apprehension. Isaiah, or Isaiah's great spiritual successor, had shown that the true purpose of the covenant was not to secure temporal or self-interested advantage for Israel, but that Israel might be the minister or instrument of God even through deprivation and suffering for the extension of the benefits of the covenant to all mankind. The teaching fell on deaf ears ; at least history provides no evidence that in those days it was ever rightly apprehended, still less

acted upon. The race was not ready for so altruistic an interpretation of covenant duties and responsibilities. The covenant was in reality world-wide. In its initiation and first declaration with a single people, it was to be extended and perpetuated for all. It needed however the experience of exile and homelessness, the removal of all prospect of worldly pre-eminence, to make dimly apparent to the Jew the meaning and purpose of his own national life. Nevertheless for some centuries it would seem that in a wide missionary activity he endeavoured in some sort to put into practice Isaiah's teaching. Then the curtain fell again and what it is impossible to regard as other than a narrow self-sufficiency carried the day. For all this the Gentile world must share the guilt ; but we know too little of the details of the history to be able to apportion blame. In the final issue the Jew failed to appreciate or to apply the teaching of his prophets, or to read the inward spiritual meaning of the divine covenant with his people. In so far his mission to the world has been a failure because it has been commercial and not unselfish and spiritual. The misunderstanding and failure of insight culminated in his rejection of Israel's Messiah, Who would have led him back to the true path of self-abnegation and service. Henceforth the way of life was as it were sealed, except at the cost of the severance of national connections and ties. There are welcome signs that a consciousness of this fact and world-wide obligation and duty is awakening in Israel.

These then were the two truths upon which the prophets took their stand in their counsel and rebuke to the children of Israel : the one and only Lord of all

the earth without peer or rival, and a nation chosen by Him and bound to Him in a covenant with special privileges and obligations. In their utterances, 'oracles,' which concerned other nations it was natural that the first should take precedence to the virtual or complete exclusion of the other. To these the concessions and demands made to and upon Israel were of no moment. They had sinned wherein they had sinned against the great fundamental and natural laws of a God who loved righteousness and hated iniquity. It was therefore on these lines that the prophetic indictment against foreign nations was for the most part framed. Both principles were of permanent and universal import. In the case of the first the rights of Jehovah as against the idols and false gods were emphasized: these have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, feet and walk not; Jehovah is the living God, who sees all, knows all, and controls all. And wrongs done to the chosen nation were the more flagrant and culpable in that they were thus done directly as it were against God himself and his protective rights over his people. These truths again which the prophets enunciated and enforced were not independent or unrelated. It was obvious however that the first might and in the ages before the establishment of the covenant did stand alone. It was unique. Nor was it necessary or inevitable that any nation should be chosen or held in special regard; and accordingly in due course and for the world in general this latter thought was depreciated or cast away. It was of permanent and vital importance however that Jehovah should be known as supreme, God of gods, able and resolved always and everywhere to enforce his will.

There was no boundary of either time or space. It was not possible or conceivable that the divine rule should be confined or interrupted. There were no limits to His authority in heaven or upon earth. And to the prophets it would appear that the covenant itself was as perpetual as its Giver, except as it was infringed and broken down by the blind and wilful transgression of man.

In this last conception which received so important an emphasis in prophetic teaching it remains true that there is much which is unfamiliar and strange to modern thought. As a whole and as a rule of faith and life it would no doubt be repudiated by the theology of our own day. Its terms and conditions are framed to accord with the ideas and knowledge of those times and peoples, to whom it was a natural and valid expression of the divine will. It would be impossible to think to-day in terms of a direct bond or convenant as conditioning the relation between man, national or individual, and God. The divine connection and rule have assumed other aspects to us, which would have been foreign and perhaps unintelligible to the prophetic age. Progressive thought in theology no less than in science has discarded old presuppositions and has endeavoured to gain conceptions and to formulate doctrines more in harmony with a wider richer experience and knowledge. The reality however and vital importance of the prophetic teaching are not thereby denied or destroyed. It was a station or stage in the development of man's thought on the relation between himself and his God ; defective and transitory as all such speculations and affirmations necessarily are ; but satisfying and true to and for its

own age and people. In the gradual development of insight and belief, in the changes of circumstance and time, it has been outgrown and superseded, not by an entire rejection as of that which was erroneous, but as taken up into and merged in a higher perception and more adequate revelation of the divine purpose and ways with regard to man. In the Christian doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God in Christ it found its new interpretation and real successor ; and assumed as it were a closer and more intimate form with the emphasis laid on the spiritual nature of the divine human relation, and the extension of covenant rights and privileges and obligations to the entire human race. There is need that this truth should be reiterated and realised. There is a covenant still between God and his people ; not the covenant as of old with its formal demands and outward sanctions ; but a spiritual covenant of the heart and mind, not less real and universal, because it seems to find its most complete expression in the individual experience and life of the Christian.

It was therefore a real and living gospel which the prophets proclaimed, not evanescent or transitory, but of permanent and universal import, and giving that proof of vitality which is furnished by the capacity of adaptation to changing needs and times while retaining the essential truth without weakening or deviation. Their teaching has not merely followed but has suggested and guided the lines of religious development in Judaism and Christianity, and through these has exercised a world-wide influence ; nor has the strong dynamic which urged it forward through so many centuries of depression and decay lost its

force, although it finds expression in different terms and with modifications to suit widely different conceptions of doctrine and life. The ground of the vitality of their teaching was that the prophets stood for a living faith, not a more or less formal and stereotyped theological doctrine; and it is an outstanding tribute to that vitality and to the reality of the prophetic consciousness of divine inspiration and guidance that their assertion of doctrine and truth has been tested by time and has maintained its interest and its validity. It is true that only a part of the prophetic utterances has been preserved, and troublous times and careless handling have dealt as hardly with the Hebrew as with most ancient literatures. If more or all had been preserved from the wreck it is not probable however that judgement on its worth would have been modified. The religious world and through it the larger community of mankind owes this debt to the courage and insight of the Hebrew preachers and seers. As the New Testament doctrine and teaching rest upon the basis of the Old, and at least in the form in which we have received them would be unintelligible and inexplicable apart from the latter; so the supreme and permanent value and greatness of the Old Testament is to be found in her prophets. Their word and thought can never die, even if they should cease to be read and considered as they are written in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is unfortunately probable that these are less widely and directly studied in our own day than at any previous epoch of the Church's history. Enthusiasm for the foundations of the faith, as distinguished from the foundations of ritual and dogma, is not on a high level. And the trend of modern

thought on the two great principles of the prophets' faith is not equally directed towards the prophets' standpoint. Perhaps this is due in part to the very simplicity and confidence of their faith. The complexity and difficulty are realised as never before of the convictions which they held and for which they were ready to lay down their lives. The implications of the doctrines are subjected to close scrutiny from many sides, and the doctrines themselves often disputed, derided, or ignored. The essential truths however which the Hebrew prophets proclaimed have become interwoven through many centuries of interpretation and consolidation into the very fibre of religious faith, and cannot be destroyed without impairing the faith itself and loosening the foundation of the citadel of truth.

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